

Alberta Education Assessment - Final Report

October 1996

Office of the
Deputy Minister

10th Floor, Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5K 0L2

Telephone 403/427-2889
Fax 403/422-9735

October 30, 1996

1996 10 31

To: Alberta Teachers' Association
Alberta School Boards' Association
College of Alberta School Superintendents
Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association
Public School Boards Association of Alberta
Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
Association of Independent Schools and Colleges
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta

In 1995, the Minister of Education commissioned Ernst & Young to conduct an assessment of the Department as a result of the *Accountability in Education Policy Framework*. The Framework followed a year-long consultation with Albertans. Education partners took part in the focus group discussions which were an integral part of this consultation.

The review focused on two primary questions:

Does Alberta Education have the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the goals for education set by government are attained?

Does Alberta Education carry out its mandate in an efficient and effective manner?

The Ernst & Young assessment concludes that "on an overall basis the department has been successful in implementing the major mechanisms to ensure school board actions align with provincial directions." However, the report does make recommendations to enhance the department's effectiveness. The recommendations closely relate to the work of the department in carrying out government's three-year plan for education and many actions already have been taken by the department to address them. For example, the first of the semi-annual meetings with superintendents has occurred and feedback has been very positive.

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I am pleased to provide a *Summary of Recommendations and Actions*, a status report on Ministry actions to address the 10 recommendations Also enclosed, for your information, is the full Ernst & Young report, *Alberta Education Assessment*.

If you have any questions, please to call me. We in Alberta Education are committed to continuous improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leroy V. Sloan', written in a cursive style.

Leroy V. Sloan
Deputy Minister

Attachments

Alberta Education Assessment by Ernst & Young

Summary of Recommendations & Actions

ERNST & YOUNG RECOMMENDATIONS

MINISTRY ACTIONS

1 Reduce process controls by reviewing legislation, regulations, departmental policies and guidelines to reduce those that are directed at the process of education delivery rather than the outcome performance of the education system.	IMPLEMENTED A formal process has been established for education stakeholder involvement in the review of all regulations and policies. ONGOING Annual reviews of regulations, policies and operating procedures will be done with the intent of modifying or eliminating those that are outdated or not required. The Regulatory Reform Workplan will be available to the public. NEW Consultations will begin with school authorities to further develop a quality improvement process for school board education planning and reporting.
2 Improve internal and external communication, including between Branches and Divisions of Alberta Education, and between Alberta Education and its education stakeholders.	IMPLEMENTED Two-way communications has improved between Ministry and school jurisdiction staff at all levels. ONGOING Work is being done to improve the coordination of requests for information. ONGOING Regular monthly meetings between the Deputy Minister of Education and all Alberta Education Directors will be continued. NEW Timelines and processes for the release and implementation of new or revised policies and procedures will be reviewed with education stakeholders. NEW An audit will be conducted of communications processes and materials. Communications strategies will be developed for each major education initiative to ensure the accuracy, consistency, clarity and timeliness of the communication.
3 Build trust between the Department and other education stakeholders.	IMPLEMENTED Semi-annual meetings have been established between school superintendents and jurisdiction administrative staff and department staff to increase system-wide commitment to the long term goals for the education system. IMPLEMENTED Attendance and participation of the Deputy Minister in regular Zone meetings of superintendents and senior school authority administrative staff has been increased.

Alberta Education Assessment by Ernst & Young

Summary of Recommendations & Actions

ERNST & YOUNG RECOMMENDATIONS

MINISTRY ACTIONS

4	Develop guidelines only if market demand is sufficient.	ONGOING	Commitment to improve communication with education stakeholders on the results of consultation processes and the possible impact.
5	Create a stronger department focus by breaking down functional and cultural barriers within the Department.	NEW	Work is being done to improve the clarity and timeliness of communications between the Ministry and education stakeholders.
		ONGOING	Annual reviews will continue regarding the need for policies and guidelines as indicated in the Regulatory Reform Action Plan for Education.
		IMPLEMENTED	All staff have individual productivity plans that have a greater focus on client service and reflect the values and goals of the organization and the Education Plan.
		IMPLEMENTED	Internal communications programs within the Ministry have been enhanced to ensure a clear understanding of values and a commitment to the achievement of the overall goals of the Education Plan.
		IMPLEMENTED	The internal processes for the planning, development and implementation of the annual Education Plan have been restructured to provide broader opportunity for staff involvement.
		IMPLEMENTED	The Ministry has been reorganized to respond to the need for efficient and effective implementation of government's plan for education.
		ONGOING	Internal budgeting process within the Ministry will continue to be refined to better reflect a focus on department priorities rather than individual branch priorities. Budget planning will relate directly to the goals of the Education Plan.

Alberta Education Assessment by Ernst & Young

Summary of Recommendations & Actions

ERNST & YOUNG

RECOMMENDATIONS

MINISTRY ACTIONS

6	Focus department efforts on core functions.	ONGOING	All Ministry activities will continue to be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the core businesses and responsibilities of government in the education sector.
		ONGOING	Negotiations will continue for the divestiture of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. Other operations will be restructured or privatized as appropriate.
7	Address the perceived lack of clarity amongst education stakeholders and departmental staff as to education policies (musts) and guidelines (shoulds).	ONGOING	Continue to work with education stakeholders to clarify the legislated responsibilities of the Minister, the Department, and education stakeholders.
		NEW	Expand two-way communication activities with department staff and education stakeholders on the Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual to help ensure clarity and understanding of government policies on education and how they relate to education outcomes.
		NEW	Review all "information" policies in the Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual to include availability to stakeholders on request through either the Internet or a CD-ROM.
		NEW	Develop and release a position paper on School Based Decision Making and clearly communicate government's intent and objective.
8	Maintain focus on outcomes and accountability.	IMPLEMENTED	Improved the process of provincial achievement test data tabulation and reporting so that the results of the Grade 3, 6 and 9 achievement tests are provided to school authorities by the end of August each year and accuracy and quality of data is maintained.
		IMPLEMENTED	Parent guides to Alberta curriculum were published to help ensure a better understanding of what Alberta students are expected to learn and the high standards they are expected to meet.
		IMPLEMENTED	A review was done of funding mechanisms and programming for students with severe disabilities. Additional reinvestment funds were allocated to address the increased number of students identified.

Alberta Education Assessment by Ernst & Young

Summary of Recommendations & Actions

ERNST & YOUNG

RECOMMENDATIONS

MINISTRY ACTIONS

ONGOING Continue to improve communications with stakeholders to ensure there is a clear understanding of the link between achievement test and diploma exam results and improved student learning.

ONGOING Review and improve performance measures under Goal 4 in the Business Plan related to improving teaching. Complete the development of updated teacher preparation, certification and evaluation processes in Alberta.

NEW A rural transportation review has been initiated. An internal review of the Sparsity & Distance and Operations & Maintenance components of the Funding Framework for School Boards will be conducted to ensure that any formula used is as fair and equitable as possible.

NEW Communicate to school authorities the actions that will be taken to ensure government education goals and outcomes are met.

NEW The coordination of services to children will be a priority area for improvement.

9 Continue to develop well respected curriculum.

ONGOING Continue to ensure the development of quality curriculum for Alberta students and to support and reflect technology integration in the education system.

10 Further clarify the agency relationship between the Minister and other education stakeholders.

ONGOING Continue to work with education stakeholders to clarify the legislated responsibilities of the Minister, the Department, and education stakeholders.

April 26, 1996

Alberta Education Assessment

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Background

The MLA Implementation Team on Accountability, established in March 1994 by the Minister of Education identified, through consultations with Albertans, an external assessment of Alberta Education as one element in establishing a more open and accountable education system for Alberta students. This report is the result of the Minister of Education responding to the MLA Implementation Team's recommendation to conduct an external review of the performance of Alberta Education.

Ernst & Young was retained by the Minister of Education to examine the extent to which Alberta Education (or "the Department") has the necessary and appropriate mechanisms in place to achieve the government's direction in the Three-Year Business Plan for Education.

Specifically, we were asked to address two questions:

- Does Alberta Education have the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the goals set by government are attained?
- Does Alberta Education carry out its mandate in an efficient and effective manner?

Summary of Findings

Alberta Education was given the responsibility to implement the government's agenda for change identified in Meeting the Challenge II Three-Year Business Plan for Education 1995-96 to 1997-98. An overview of the business plan is attached on the following page. The changes implemented were significant, and the pace of change was rapid. The Department is responsible for establishing appropriate mechanisms to ensure the Business Plan goals are attained.

In response to the question of whether Alberta Education has the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the goals set by government are attained, our findings suggest on an overall basis the Department has been successful in implementing the major mechanisms to ensure school board actions align with provincial directions.

For Goals 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 progress has been substantial, and the appropriate mechanisms have been implemented. Goals 3 and 4 have received limited attention to date, and few mechanisms have been implemented. Goal 1 is the key goal for Alberta Education, and it does not have a defined "finish line". Accordingly progress towards attaining this goal continually needs to be evaluated. Goal

Overview: Business Plan for Education - 1995/96 to 1997/98

Issues & Challenges

- building a strong social and economic future for Alberta
- Increasing public demand for accountability
- increasing public expectations for education
- coordinating services for children
- changing the governance and delivery of education
- addressing the fiscal inequities among school jurisdictions
- harnessing technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education
- assisting government in achieving a balanced budget by 1996/97
- changing the way government does business

Context

- School Act
- Alberta Education Mission Statement
- Goals of Schooling
- Goals of Education
- Definitions of Basic Education
- Core Values
- Vision for the '90s
- Alberta Education Results Reports
- Policies and Programs of Study
- Budget '93 and '94
- Meeting the Challenge 94/95 - 96/97

Goals

1. Focus education on what students need to know; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.
2. Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/community involvement in education.
3. Improve the coordination of services for special needs children.
4. Improve teaching.
5. Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.
6. Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.
7. Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.
8. Ensure that the cost of education is reasonable and under control.
9. Ensure that the education system is open and accountable.

Desired Results

1.
 - Students, teachers and parents know what is expected of Alberta students.
 - Students achieve the standards in the provincial curriculum.
 - Students are prepared for entry into post-secondary education and the workplace.
 - Alberta students perform favourably compared to students outside the province.
2. • Parents and students have increased opportunities to select schools and programs.
3. • Students with special needs have access to the services they require.
4. • Teachers are able to help students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need for the future.
5. • Schools and school jurisdictions are effective and efficient.
6. • All students have equitable educational opportunities.
7. • Alberta Education is reduced and focuses on business plan and core functions.
 - Productivity of the department is increased.
8. • The costs of basic education meet government target.
9. • Information is used to make improvements throughout the education system.
 - Albertans have timely information on student achievement and the performance and cost of the education system.

Strategies (Selected)

1.
 - Set and communicate high standards for student learning
 - Complete development of Career and Technology Studies
 - Expand achievement testing/reduce testing duplication, and expand diploma exam program
2. • Increase program and school choice within and between school jurisdictions
 - Pilot Charter Schools
3. • Implement results of coordination of services pilot projects
4. • Establish competencies for beginning and experienced teachers
 - Update teacher preparation and certification requirements
 - Coordinated approach to teacher professional development
5. • Implement school-based management
 - Increase shared services among school boards and other agencies
 - Increase use of technology to deliver programs
 - New roles and responsibilities in education
6. • Implement new funding framework and new capital plan
 - Phase in uniform provincial mill rates
7. • Downsize Department of Education
 - Restructure/privatize some functions
 - Implement employee performance management system
8. • Meet budget target
 - Limit school board spending on administration
9. • Education performance measures
 - Comprehensive management reviews
 - School board education plans
 - School board and provincial reports on results
 - Provincial approval of superintendent appointments

7, relating to the Department's internal effectiveness and efficiency, is addressed separately below.

Our research, which involved internal department analysis, external education stakeholder consultation, and objective assessment, has identified a number of issues within each goal which, if addressed, would enhance the effectiveness of the implemented mechanisms.

In addition to the implementation issues identified for each goal, we identified several overall system governance issues which impact on Alberta Education's ability to align school board actions with provincial directions. These governance issues involve the themes of clear vision, effective communication, mechanisms for goal optimizing behaviour, evaluation and feedback loops, and efficient information systems.

In response to the question of whether Alberta Education carries out its mandate in an efficient and effective manner, our research approach had a primary focus on external education stakeholder assessment of effectiveness and efficiency. A number of operational and organizational issues were identified which impact on the Department's ability to achieve the directions set out in the Business Plan. These primarily relate to goal-activity alignment, internal cultural issues, and external communications processes.

The key strategic decision facing Alberta Education is whether to focus its mechanisms on the "processes" of education delivery, or whether to focus its mechanisms on the "outcomes" delivered by education stakeholders. External education stakeholders regularly and strongly indicated the system would be most effective if Alberta Education focused primarily on establishing standards for the system, and on monitoring outcomes. Currently, there is a mix of mechanisms, which confuses the accountability relationships between education stakeholders.

To effectively implement a governance system that is outcome focused, the Department needs to identify using feedback from its primary client group (students, parents, and the general public) and other education stakeholders, the appropriate measures of educational outcomes. Accountability mechanisms, such as comparable results reporting and consequence management, must be determined in relation to the accepted outcome measures.

Key Recommendations

While we make many recommendations throughout our report regarding the implementation of government policy as documented in Alberta Education's business plan, we believe there are several key recommendations that deserve the Department's initial consideration:

Reduce "Process" Controls

We recommend the Department review the School Act, supporting regulations, departmental policies and guidelines ("mechanisms") to identify those that are directed at the "process" of education delivery. Mechanisms aimed at "process" should be reduced, where they are believed to have limited impact on the outcome performance of the education system.

To further increase the outcome orientation of the education system, acceptable measures of educational outcomes should be identified as previously noted. As well, appropriate corrective actions and consequences should be identified by Alberta Education to address poor performance outcomes and issues of non-compliance. Once these mechanisms are in place, the Department should consider reducing remaining "process" controls.

Improve Internal and External Communication

We believe there is opportunity to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the education system by improving the communication between branches and divisions of Alberta Education (internal), and between Alberta Education and its education stakeholders (external). To improve communication, we suggest Alberta Education consider a number of initiatives.

To improve internal communication, the Department should encourage a "sharing of information" culture within the Department by openly discussing, between divisions and branches, issues, challenges and plans affecting the entire Department. Senior management should consistently repeat the same themes to all staff to ensure the organization clearly understands government's vision and goals for the Department and the education system.

External communication would be improved by, prioritizing messages and reducing volume of information communicated to education stakeholders. We encourage the Department to continually evaluate and select the most appropriate media (based on

the target audience) to increase the effectiveness of external communication. We understand the Department is introducing the use of various new media (e.g. CD-ROM, Internet, etc.) to communicate with the general public and other education stakeholders

Build Trust Between the Department and Other Education Stakeholders

We realize the education system in Alberta has undergone a significant amount of change in the last few years. As with any major change initiative, relationships become strained, which if ignored, can become detrimental to overall system performance. Now that the majority of change initiatives have been implemented, we recommend Alberta Education work at strengthening the relationships between the Department and its education stakeholders. Some of the initiatives the Department might consider include:

- promote open discussion between the Department and Trustees and Superintendents of the directions for the education system;
- increase the frequency of meetings between senior staff of Alberta Education and administrative staff of school boards; and
- meet with Superintendents regionally without an agenda.

Develop “Guidelines” Only if Market Demand is Sufficient

Alberta Education produces guidelines to assist education stakeholders in implementing government and Department policies. By their nature, guidelines are directed at the “process” of education delivery. Based on feedback obtained during the study, education stakeholders attach varying levels of value to guidelines. As well, guidelines appear to contribute to confusion amongst education stakeholders as to what are government’s policies (“musts”) and what are Alberta Education guidelines (“shoulds”).

Given that some of the guidelines developed by Alberta Education are valued by education stakeholders, there is a “market” to be served by the Department. Where there is sufficient demand indicated by education stakeholders, the Department should continue to develop guidelines. We believe there is opportunity to limit the number and scope of guidelines from that currently supplied, if guidelines are only developed and issued where there is sufficient market demand.

Create a Stronger “Department” Focus by Breaking-Down Functional and Cultural Barriers Within the Department

To ensure the Department’s overall efficiency and effectiveness is optimized, we recommend the Department work at increasing the focus on the Department’s objectives and goals, as opposed to divisional and branch objectives and goals. Some of the initiatives that might be pursued to create a stronger “Department” focus are:

- Build an understanding amongst staff, divisions and branches that everyone in the Department is “mutually accountable” for the attainment of the goals in the Business Plan;
- Work at instilling a “client service” orientation throughout the Department. Clients are both external (education stakeholders) and internal (divisions and branches);
- Continue to increase the management of the Department’s operating budget and spending in accordance with the Business Plan (goal-orientation);
- Review the organization structure to ensure it optimally and logically facilitates the roles and responsibilities of the Department; and
- Continue creating common understanding throughout the Department (all functions and levels) as to the key strategic objectives and operational strategies flowing from the Business Plan.

Focus Department Efforts on Core Functions

The Department’s operating budget has been significantly reduced over the last few years. In light of these and potential future operating budget reductions, the Department should continue to prioritize the functions of Alberta. Where necessary, Alberta Education involvement in non-core functions should be reduced or eliminated.

Address the Perceived Lack of Clarity Amongst Education Stakeholders and Departmental Staff as to Alberta Education Policies (“Musts”) and Guidelines (“Shoulds”)

External education stakeholders indicated to us in our focus group sessions, they perceive a lack of clarity between Alberta Education Policies (“musts”) and Guidelines (“shoulds”). Further the external

education stakeholders indicated they perceive the Department's staff is unclear themselves as to what are policies ("musts") and what are guidelines ("shoulds"). We recommend the Department work at clarifying this perception.

Continue to Maintain Focus on Outcomes and Accountability

Alberta Education has made substantial progress in increasing the focus of the education system in Alberta on outcomes, and the accountability for those outcomes. We recommend the Department continue to implement mechanisms that enhance outcome measurement and accountability.

Continue to Develop Well-Respected Curriculum

Feedback we received during our assessment regularly identified Alberta Education as being a well-respected and competent leader in the area of curriculum development. Feedback we received indicates curriculum development is a core function of the Department, which should be maintained and built upon.

Further Clarify the Agency Relationship Between the Minister and other Education Stakeholders

The School Act divides the legislated responsibility for education between the Province and local school boards as agents of the Minister. The School Act balances the powers and responsibilities of the province with the power and responsibilities of locally elected school boards. It recognizes that the strength of Alberta's education system lies in strong leadership and commitment to education at both the provincial and local levels.

Optimal system performance can only be achieved where each education stakeholder clearly understands their role, responsibilities and accountabilities in the system. We recommend Alberta Education continue to clarify and document the agency relationship as defined by legislation, as well as clarify the interrelationship of roles and accountabilities among education stakeholders.

1.0 Terms of Reference

Ernst & Young was retained by the Minister of Education to examine the extent to which Alberta Education (the "Department") has the necessary and appropriate mechanisms in place to achieve the government's direction in the Three-Year Business Plan for Education.

In relation to the implementation of the government's business plan for restructuring and improving education in *Meeting the Challenge II: 1995/96 to 1997/98*, the study was to address the following:

- Does Alberta Education have appropriate mechanisms in place to attain the goals set by government, including sufficient and appropriate guidance and compliance mechanisms to ensure the alignment of school board actions with provincial directions?
- Does Alberta Education carry out its major responsibilities for implementing the business plan in an efficient and effective manner? Are the resources of Alberta Education organized and coordinated adequately to achieve the directions set out in the business plan?

The project's terms of reference were specifically directed to assess the "implementation" of government policies contained in the business plan. The Department has control over policy implementation, and limited control over policy setting. Assessment of government set policies contained in the business plan was not an objective of this study. However, in certain instances where consistent and strong input was received from education stakeholders on government policy, this feedback is included in the report to serve as background.

The following sections outline the study approach, background and study findings.

2.0 Study Approach

As agreed with the Minister, the approach to the study was highly consultative with education stakeholders¹. There was a strong focus on obtaining feedback from stakeholders with whom implementation mechanisms have the greatest impact. The Department works through education stakeholders in attaining the goals of the business plan, therefore the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department was assessed with a strong focus on their input.

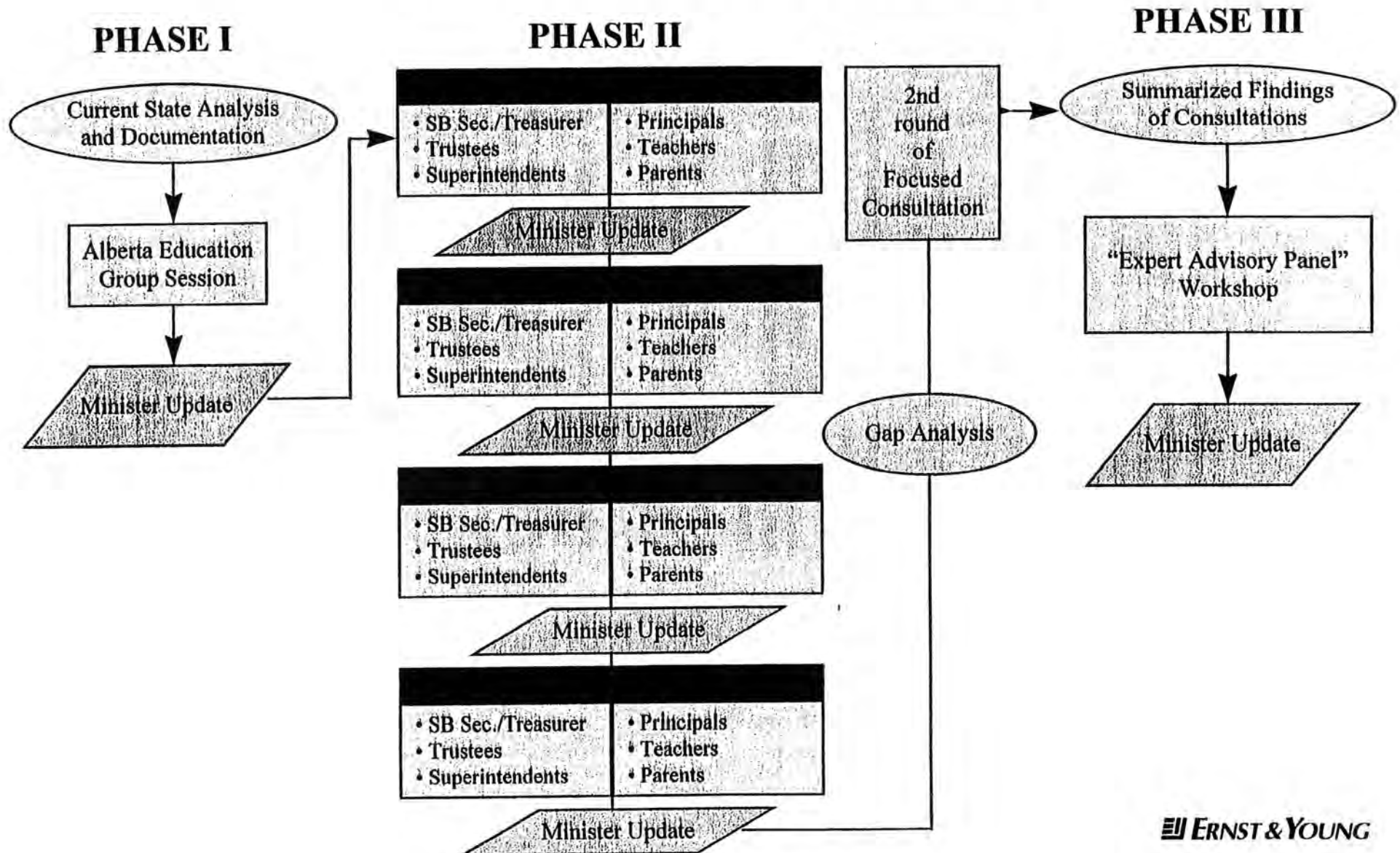
The project approach consisted of three phases. The specific project methodology is depicted in the flow chart on the following page.

Phase I consisted of an analysis of Department processes and resources. The tasks associated with this phase included:

- Development of process input-output models for each of the business plan goals. The purpose was to define the Department processes that are performed in achieving the goals as well as identifying and confirming the inputs used and the outputs produced in those processes. These models are attached as Appendix 1.
- Allocation of the Department's operating budget to the business plan goals. The budget allocation results are attached as Appendix 2.
- Development of an inventory of the current guidance and control mechanisms, and creation of a typology of those mechanisms. The scope of the study was not to evaluate on an individual basis each of the mechanisms that have been created. Rather, these mechanisms were addressed from the perspective of a suite of mechanisms or "tools" developed to achieve desired results. The typology of mechanisms was categorized into the following areas:
 - curriculum;
 - student evaluation/testing;
 - teacher certification/evaluation/development;
 - special education/special needs;
 - choice/involvement;
 - reporting results; and
 - funding/allocation/monitoring/operations.

¹For the purpose of this study, education stakeholders are considered to include Alberta Education, School Boards and Trustees, School Board Administration, Principals, Teachers and Parents.

Education Stakeholder Consultation



These mechanisms were also categorized according to the continuum of control in which they fall. These were characterized as either being: Legislation; Regulation; Ministerial Order & Directive; Policy; regulatory; guide/regulatory; or guide.

The typology of mechanisms is attached as Appendix 3.

Phase I also included a focus group session with Alberta Education Directors to obtain input on controls and mechanisms as well as input on implementation issues. A total of 18 Directors attended this session.

In addition, a focus group was conducted with a broad sampling of Alberta Education staff below the Directors level. This session was to obtain input on organizational issues, and to perform change readiness and communication assessments using proprietary Ernst & Young tools.

An information session was held with five provincial education organizations to discuss the study and provide an opportunity to discuss issues. A list of the organizations in attendance is included in Appendix 4.

Focus group sessions were facilitated using electronic balloting technology as an aide. Issues were presented to focus group participants and, with wireless, hand-held response units, they were able to anonymously indicate their rating for each issue. Their input was fed directly into a portable computer and was summarized and analyzed instantaneously. The results were displayed using computer projection so all participants could see the issues that were judged to be most important or least important to the group.

The use of this technology was not to arrive at a statistically valid random sample of opinion. Rather, the quantitative results of the focus groups served to "point the way" to issues, highlighting the force of themes and direction. The results then facilitated discussion and input from focus group participants regarding issues.

Phase II consisted of a series of eight focus groups with education stakeholders held throughout the province. These sessions were held in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge. In total, 108 participants from a broad cross section of school jurisdictions attended these sessions. A list of the participants is included in Appendix 4.

In order to identify focus group participants, the Department requested nominees from a broad cross-section of school jurisdictions and from private schools. Nominees included trustees, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, principals, teachers and parents. The list of nominees was provided to Ernst & Young and a selection of participants was made based on representation from both urban and rural areas from the public and separate systems as well as private schools.

Two focus groups were held in each of the four locations. One focus group consisted of a random selection of school board superintendents, secretary-treasurers and trustees. The other focus group consisted of a random selection of principals, teachers and parents. The objectives of Phase II were to:

- identify "gaps" between current state guidance and control mechanisms and those required to support the future vision;
- discuss the effectiveness of the suite of current mechanisms in attaining the nine business plan goals;
- discuss the effectiveness, importance and appropriateness of Alberta Education fulfilling current roles in the education system.

Following the initial series of focus groups, Phase III included a second round of focused consultations, held with a selected group of representatives who had attended the first focus group sessions. This was to confirm and validate issues and findings and to discuss alternatives. Two such sessions were held and in total, 20 participants attended this second round of consultation. A list of the participants who attended those sessions is included in Appendix 4.

It should be noted that while the education stakeholder focus group sessions included a cross-section of the stakeholders who regularly deal with the Department on administrative matters, the sessions did not include any representation from those individuals who contact the Department to appeal a decision or to request that the Department intercede on their behalf. This limitation on focus group participants was made to ensure the feedback obtained in the sessions focused on the general implementation matters pertaining to the business plan, and not on circumstances and decisions made with respect to individual cases and appeals. This limitation was agreed to by the Minister at the outset of the assessment.

In order to add another level of objectivity to the study findings, an Advisory Panel of business and education leaders was formed by

Ernst & Young to review the findings of the assessment for feedback and input. A list of those participants is included in Appendix 4.

Ministerial update sessions were held after each phase of the project and after each of the focus groups.

To conclude this assessment, we delivered a findings presentation to the Minister, Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Ministers.

3.0 Background

Responsibility for Education in Alberta

To fully understand current issues and challenges facing education in Alberta, it is important to have an understanding of the statutory responsibilities, authorities and accountability relationships between the Minister and School Boards. This section provides a brief overview of the relationships between the various education stakeholders.

The Minister of Education in Alberta is responsible for the provision of basic education to school age children resident in Alberta. This responsibility is delegated to School Board Trustees, who, in turn, may delegate their responsibility to their employees. Both the Minister of Education and School Trustees are directly accountable to Albertans as elected officials. However, it is important to note the School Board Trustees are also accountable to the Minister of Education based on the statutory provisions of the School Act.

While much autonomy has been delegated to School Trustees, the School Act stipulates a number of areas in education where power remains with the Minister. For example, s. 25 stipulates a number of powers that are beyond the control of School Trustees, if the Minister so chooses:

- prescribe courses of study or education programs, including the amount of instruction time;
- authorize courses of study, education programs or instructional materials for use in schools;
- prescribe the minimum total hours of instruction a board shall make available to a student in a school year;
- approve any course, education program or instructional material that may be submitted to the Minister by a board or another operator of a school for use in a school;
- by order adopt or approve goals and standards applicable to the provision of education in Alberta;
- make regulations:
 - governing the evaluation and inspection of teachers;
 - respecting the granting of certificates and diplomas;

-
- respecting the examination and evaluation of individuals by the Minister, including appeals, fees and the payment of remuneration;
 - for the establishment, operation, administration and management of schools, institutes or facilities for the education and training of persons with special educational needs and prescribing fees or a schedule of fees to be charged for any matter connected with the school, institute or facility;

In addition to retaining the basic powers described above, Sections 104 and 105 of the School Act provide that the Minister may accept appeals of disputes between boards and others after the opportunities for local appeal have been exhausted. The School Act S. 105(1) further states "the Minister may, subject to this Act and the regulations, make whatever decision with respect to the matter in dispute that appears to him to be appropriate in the circumstance, and that decision is final".

Another important power of the Minister with respect to the delivery of education in Alberta is the power to remove a board of school trustees. S. 25.3 of the School Act states the Minister may remove a board of trustees under certain conditions.

In summary, the Minister of Education is responsible for education of school age Albertans. While much authority has been delegated to School Board Trustees, responsibility ultimately rests with the Minister. The key areas in which the Minister has an important role are those regarding student access to an education program including hearing appeals from parents about placement of their children, school closures, and fees. The School Act allows the Minister to set basic school operation rules and regulations and empowers the Minister to remove a board of trustees if they are not appropriately fulfilling their delegated authority.

Alberta Government Business Planning Process

The Alberta government mandated all Departments to develop a Three-Year Business Plan to guide their operations, with a particular focus on results and outcomes. The business planning process is a key provincial initiative in re-focusing the efforts of all government departments on "core" services of government, thereby supporting deficit elimination efforts.

At the time of this study, government's current business plan for education is "*Meeting the Challenge II – Three-Year Business Plan*".

for Education 1995/96 - 1997/98" (the "business plan"). The Plan documents a framework for meeting government's responsibility for educating Alberta children. The Plan contains:

- 9 Goals for Education
- 40 Strategies linked to the Goals

An overview of the business plan for Education is provided on the following page (excerpt from the business plan). It identifies the Goals and Strategies identified in the plan, as well as some of the Issues & Challenges, Desired Results and Context facing Alberta Education.

Restructuring of Education in Alberta

Education in Alberta has been significantly restructured since 1992. The restructuring involves three main thrusts: funding changes, governance changes, and delivery changes.

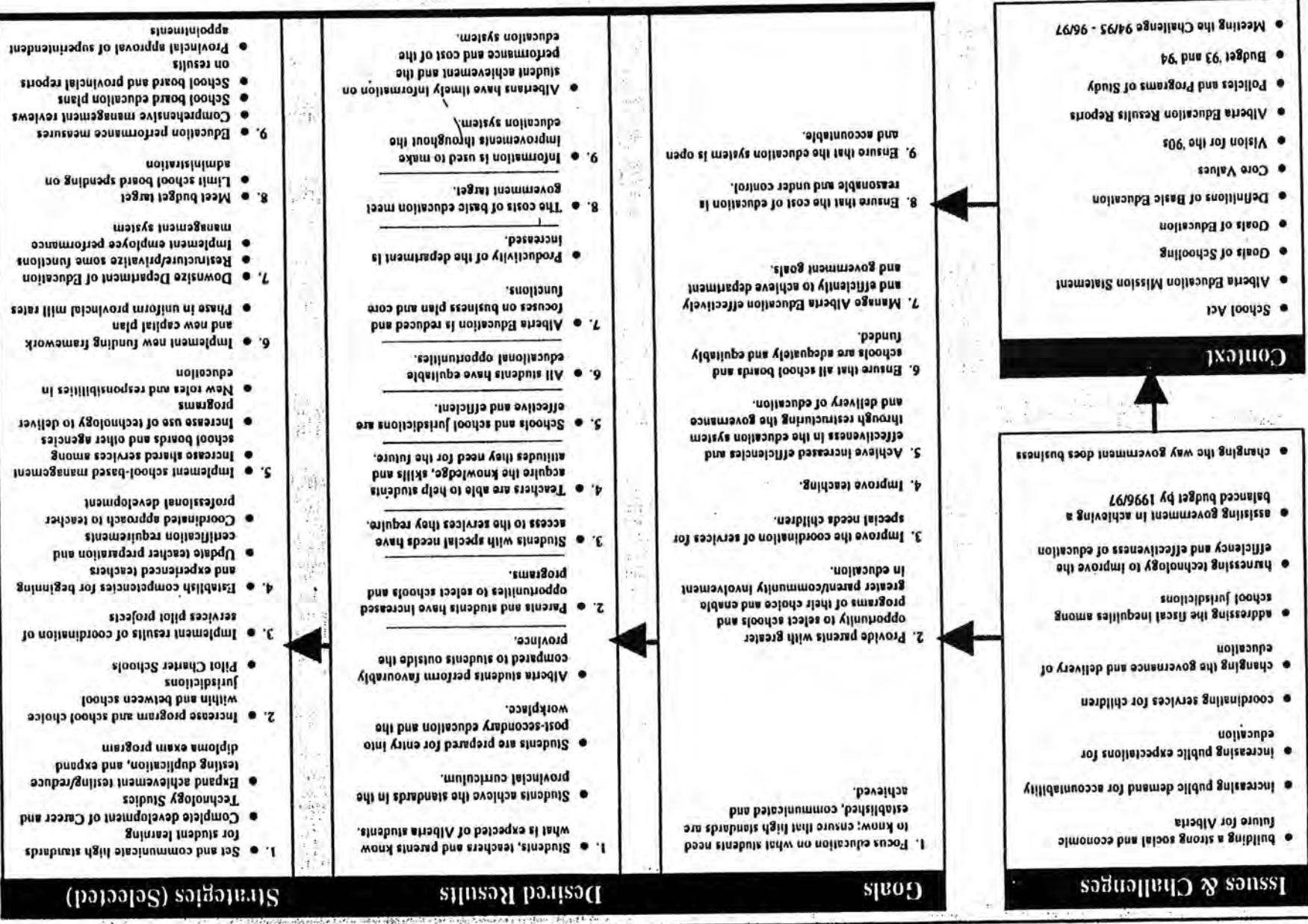
Summary of Funding Changes

The funding changes were primarily driven by the government's commitment to bring equity to funding for school boards; streamline administration to allow a more direct flow of resources to the classroom; and reduce total education spending. In addition to reducing overall spending on education, Alberta Education also enacted changes to increase the equity of funding available to school boards.

Key funding changes since 1992 are:

- A reduction in total education spending on by approximately 4.3% to \$2.8 B.
- Increased funding equity between school boards by assuming control of the collection of local education taxes (based on Property Tax Assessments), and the allocation of funds to school boards based on an enrolment -based funding framework
 - In 1992, the per student expenditure by School Jurisdictions ranged from \$3,663 to \$22,582.
 - In 1995, the range of Per Student Expenditure by School Jurisdictions ranged from \$5,137 to \$12,078.
- A new Funding Framework that capped administrative spending, and provided fewer "blocks" of funding. There are now three main blocks:

Overview: Business Plan for Education - 1995/96 to 1997/98



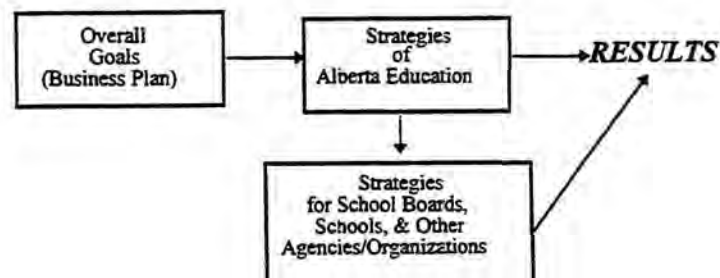
- Instructional Block
 - Support Block (Plant Operations, Transportation, Board Governance, Administration)
 - Capital
- Funding to school boards is primarily based on student enrolment and course completion. "Funding Follows the Student" within Alberta's public education system. At the high school level funding is based on the principle that instructional services are provided and courses are completed.

Summary of Governance Changes

Results within Alberta's education system are being driven by strategies for which :

- Alberta Education is directly responsible;
- School boards, schools and other agencies/organizations are directly responsible;
- Alberta Education does not have direct responsibility but can influence results through school boards, schools and other agencies/organizations.

This is illustrated in the diagram below.



The overall governance structure of education in Alberta has remained unchanged. The roles and responsibilities of key educational stakeholders in the process are similar in 1996 when compared to 1992. The exception to this is the introduction of the role of school councils.

However, within this overall governance framework, a number of alterations have been implemented since 1992. These are:

- Reduction in the number of school boards from about 181 to about 66.
- Minister now gives prior approval to the appointments of superintendents by school boards.
- Legislated the creation of School Councils to provide local, community-based feedback to Schools.
- Publish education results (tests and satisfactions surveys) at a provincial and local level.

Summary of Delivery Changes

Key examples of changes related to delivery include:

- Created “open boundaries” so students can attend the schools of their choice within the public and separate systems provided there is room and resources available (see School Act S. 28(3)).
- Enabled the establishment of up to 15 Charter Schools.

Public Consultation on Restructuring of Education

Prior to the restructuring of the education system, Alberta Education facilitated two processes to obtain input on the future direction of education:

- Two provincial “Roundtable” discussions were held to obtain broad input from stakeholders on new directions for education. These sessions included over 250 invited participants.
- Solicited public input through the distribution of over 27,000 consultation workbooks. Over 17,000 written submissions, representing 31,200 Albertans, were received.

To assist in the restructuring of Alberta education, five “MLA Teams” were established with a mandate to seek input from education interest groups and the general public and to provide advice to the Minister on the implementation of key directions of the education business plan including:

- Amalgamation/Regionalization of School Boards
- Roles and Responsibilities in Education
- Accountability Framework (Results Reporting)

-
- Framework for Funding School Boards
 - Business Involvement and Technology Integration

The findings of these initiatives have been made public through a variety of discussion papers, position papers, and government policy decisions.

Summary of Education Financing Issues in Alberta

Spending on education contains two components:

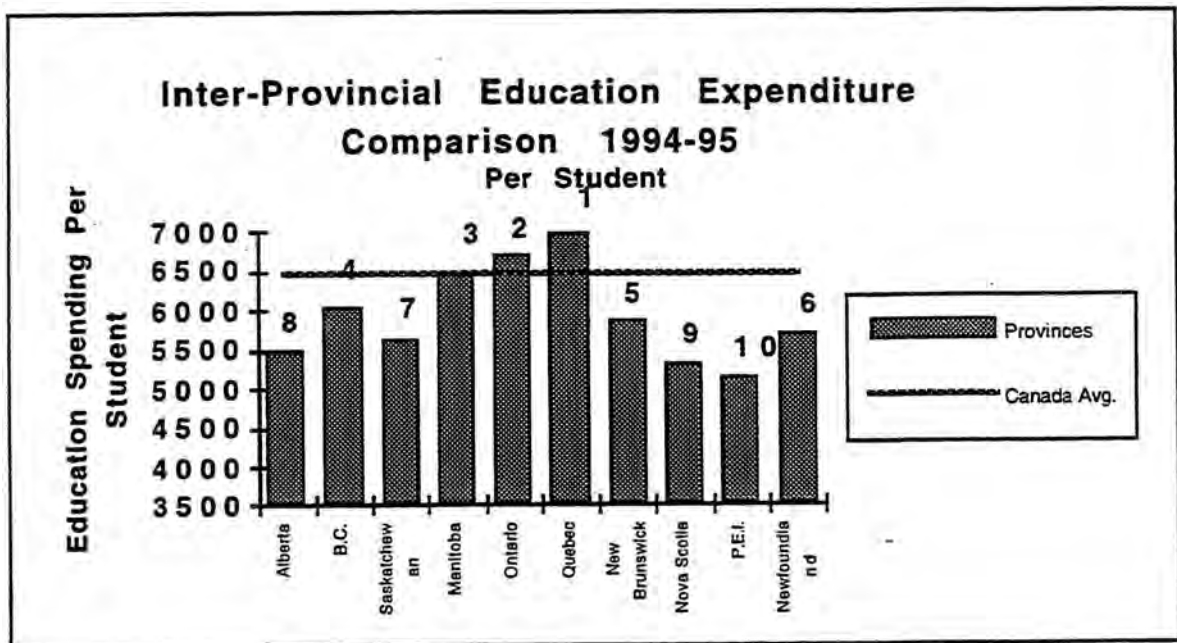
- 1) School Board spending on instruction and administration -- \$2.75B or 98.2% of total provincial spending.
- 2) Alberta Education spending on system governance and administration - \$49.3M or 1.8% of total provincial spending.

School Board spending will be reduced from \$2.936B in 1993 to \$2.765B in 1997. This is an approximate cumulative reduction from 1993 of 6%.

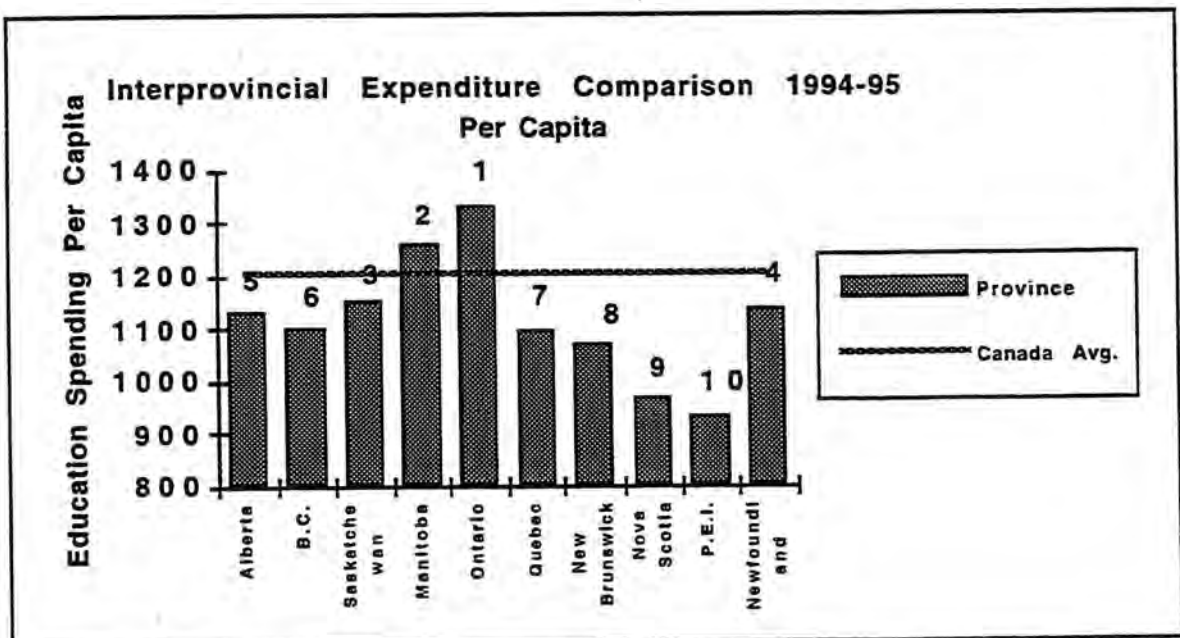
Alberta Education Department spending has been reduced from \$56.3M in 1993 to \$49.3M in 1996. This is an approximate reduction of 12%. By 1998, Department spending will be reduced by approximately 30% from 1993 levels (i.e., approximately \$39.4M). Alberta Education staffing levels (FTEs) will be reduced by similar percentages as spending reduction percentages. While some services have been scaled back or eliminated, the Department continues to provide many of the services that were provided in 1992 prior to the significant budget reductions.

With a view to directing a higher level of funding to students, government has mandated that school boards spend no more than 5.2% of their total funding on "Central Administration" and centralized instruction support, and this limit will be reduced to 4.8% by 1997/98.

Total system spending on education in Alberta, as compared to other provinces, on a per student and per capita basis is illustrated in the following two charts from the Provincial Results Report:



As outlined in the above chart, Alberta's per student spending rank in Canada was fifth in 1993 and reduced to eighth in 1995.



As outlined in the above chart, Alberta's per capita spending rank was third in 1993 and reduced to fifth in 1995.

The background outlined in this section forms the frame of reference within which implementation issues were examined, as discussed in the following sections.

4.0 Discussion of Mechanisms Relative to Business Plan Goals

This section examines the mechanisms in place to achieve business plan goals. For each goal, implementation issues are identified with respect to the Department's ability to achieve the goals within its business plan. Discussion reflects feedback received from focus group participants, as well as other issues identified through the course of this study.

Detailed feedback from focus group participants regarding Alberta Education's policy implementation mechanisms in place as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department is provided in Appendix 5, which is divided in the following sections:

- A5.1 External focus groups with trustees, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, principals, teachers and parents.
- A5.2 Internal Alberta Education Directors focus group.
- A5.3 Comparison of internal/external feedback on effectiveness and appropriateness of Alberta Education mechanism.
- A5.4 Organizational Change Management assessments of Alberta Education staff.

It is important to note that much of the feedback from focus group participants centered around opportunities for improvement within the Department. This bias is expected in studies with terms of reference similar to this assessment. In our experience, people tend to focus on areas for improvement, as opposed to areas which are satisfactory.

Our analysis in this section (and the report generally) is also focused more on areas for improvement rather than areas of satisfaction or excellence. This does not suggest general dissatisfaction amongst education stakeholders with the performance by Alberta Education. There was broad recognition by education stakeholders of the strengths of Alberta Education. Some of these strengths include:

- Maintenance of an excellent education system within the Province of Alberta;
- Recognition the Department has been functioning within a significant environment of change and is being faced with resource reductions;

- Alberta Education staff are a dedicated, competent group of individuals committed to the well being of the province's education system;
- The alignment of the Department's budget to goals identified within the business plan is seen as positive and the Department is a leader within government in that regard; and
- The development of measurers by which to monitor the performance of the education system is a positive direction.

Goal 1: Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.

This business plan goal is the first of the four key goals that are pivotal to achieving Alberta Education's mandate and directly support student learning. This goal has two main components: establishing learner expectations (curriculum), and assessing whether students have met the learner expectations (student achievement). These two components can only be achieved if all education stakeholders know and understand the learner expectations and evaluation standards.

The majority of the Department's operating budget is directed at Goal 1. Appendix 4 illustrates that approximately \$18 M or 37% of the Department's \$50 M total operating budget is directed at this goal. Of the \$18 M directed at Goal 1, approximately \$4.0 M is spent on curriculum, \$10.6 M on student evaluation and testing, and \$3.4 M on administrative activities.

Goal 1 Implementation Issues

Goal 1 has a long-term focus. Alberta Education and the other education stakeholders will continually strive to attain the objectives of Goal 1, but there will always be a need to question whether education is focused on the right things, whether the standards are appropriate, and whether enough students are attaining the standards. Simply, Goal 1 is not a "project" with a fixed target, that once reached allows people to stop striving to attain the goal.

Several major initiatives have been implemented by Alberta Education in the past few years aimed at attaining this goal's objectives. We reviewed the major initiatives, processes, outputs and mechanisms of Alberta Education in this area with focus group participants, and their feedback is summarized below.

Curriculum

Alberta Education is responsible for developing the curriculum for ESC to Grade 12 students that specifies the expectations of student learning. Alberta Education has a variety of curriculum mechanisms (see the Typology in Appendix 3), but the key curriculum mechanisms relied on by educators are the “Program of Studies” and the “Guides to Education”.

Education stakeholders indicated strong support for Alberta Education’s role of “establishing standards for learner expectations and curriculum”². Superintendents, trustees and secretary-treasurers, as well as principals, teachers and parents rated this role as relatively high in terms of:

- the importance of the role to the success of the education system;
- the appropriateness of Alberta Education’s involvement in the role; and
- Alberta Education’s effectiveness in the role.

Focus group participants consistently supported the curriculum mechanisms and outputs implemented by Alberta Education. Participants generally indicated that Alberta was a leader in Canada and North America in the area of curriculum.

A comparison of internal Alberta Education Directors focus group feedback and external focus group feedback on the “typology” of Alberta Education mechanisms (see Appendix 5, p. A5-61) shows curriculum tools (mechanisms) received the relatively highest ratings by both the Alberta Education Directors and the external focus group participants in terms of appropriateness, effectiveness of implementation and perceived value.

In general, the focus group participants supported Alberta Education’s work in the area of curriculum. However, they did have some particular areas of concern that should be considered:

- There is some concern the quality of curriculum outputs may start to decline due to Alberta Education budget reductions.

²Refer to Appendix 5, p. A5-40 for detailed analysis of external education stakeholder feedback on Alberta Education roles.

- Some participants perceived that Alberta Education places more emphasis on making curriculum changes than on supporting the effective implementation of existing curriculum.
- While there was strong support for the Program of Studies and the Guides to Education, participants did not attach as high a value to other curriculum guides, etc. in the Typology. They indicated the extra guides are “nice to have”, but not essential.
- The Career and Technology Studies (CTS) program was generally viewed as a positive initiative, but there were substantial concerns about the implementation of the CTS curriculum, including:
 - too many modules;
 - lack of implementation guidance; and
 - difficult to evaluate and test.
- Recent curriculum changes have not been scheduled and implemented with as much lead time as in the past.
- Concern that textbook publishers are encouraging curriculum changes.
- To ensure efficiencies in the system, curriculum should be set centrally. Curriculum development duplication at the school board level was more prevalent in the past, but has been reduced due to resource restrictions.
- Several people questioned whether there was consensus as to “what students need to learn”, and whether Alberta Education has been successful at developing a definition of basic education.
- Regional Office services in supporting curriculum implementation have been eliminated, and these services were valued by some education stakeholders (most valued by rural schools and school boards).

Student Achievement

Alberta Education monitors student achievement through the provincial Achievement Testing and Diploma Exam program. The Achievement Testing program is aimed at Grades 3, 6 and 9, and the Diploma Exam program for Grade 12 subjects. Alberta Education is responsible for designing, developing, marking, and also for analyzing the results of the exams. Effective 1995, each grade 6, 9 and 12 student is tested in the four core subjects of Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science. Grade 3 students are tested in Reading, Writing and Math. Achievement Test results are used to

monitor trends in student achievement, while Diploma Exam marks are used as 50% of the student's final course grade.

Alberta Education spends approximately \$10.6 M or 21% of its budget on the provincial Achievement Testing and Diploma Exam program. The provincial testing program expanded significantly in 1995. The Achievement Tests were previously only administered on a rotational basis, but they are now administered in each subject each year, which approximately quadrupled the number of tests. The Diploma Exam was expanded this year to include Social Studies 33 and Mathematics 33, and the program now covers eleven subjects.

Provincial testing of student achievement is a controversial issue amongst education stakeholders, with a broad range of opinion. During our external focus group sessions we received feedback on the "policy" of provincial testing, both positive and negative. Because the study's terms of reference were to focus on the implementation of government policy, we discouraged discussion and debate on the policy of provincial testing, and encouraged education stakeholders to comment on the implementation of provincial testing.

In focus group feedback superintendents, trustees, and secretary-treasurers rated "provincial testing" as being of moderately high importance, appropriateness, and effectiveness. Principals and teachers rated each category lower, and in particular, rated "provincial testing" as being of low importance to the success of the education system. These results are effective at illustrating the marked difference in views on the policy of provincial testing of student achievement.

In comparing focus group feedback between internal Alberta Education Directors and external focus group participants, there is some difference as to the appropriateness, effective implementation and value of the Student Evaluation/Testing set of "tools". Internally, these tools received relatively high ratings on all three categories as compared to the other groups of tools. Externally, the ratings were relatively moderate.

The external focus groups surfaced a number of implementation issues with respect to the provincial testing program:

- Alberta Education takes too long to determine and release the results of Achievement Tests. The results of Achievement Tests written in June 1995 were not released until December 1995, and

the full analyses was not released until January 1996. This delay reduces the value of the results, because adjustments to teaching cannot be made by the start of the new school year.

- Provincial testing exemption policies were an issue. Education stakeholders questioned the need to apply to the Minister to obtain an exemption, and also questioned the appropriateness of assigning what is perceived to be a mark of "below standard" to students who were appropriately exempted.
- The provincial testing program was viewed to be too heavily focused on easily testable areas of the curriculum; "performance-based" skills of the curriculum are not tested.
- Fixed dates of provincial tests hinder school boards from offering innovative programs (e.g. year-round schooling).
- Some participants perceive that home education students can refuse to take the Achievement Tests.
- Some participants felt the provincial testing program may cost too much, when compared to the benefits derived. Some questioned the need to have universal testing. They suggested that sampling could achieve the monitoring objectives of the program, at a lower cost.
- Participants held different opinions as to whether standards were high.
- The publication of the results of the provincial testing program, and the potential uses of the results was often a concern of the education stakeholders. These concerns are discussed in this section under Goal 9 later in this section.

Communication of High Standards

Ensuring that all education stakeholders (including parents) understand the standards (learner expectations) that have been established, is a key component in enabling students to attain the standards. Some of the key initiatives undertaken by Alberta Education to increase understanding of provincial standards are:

- Teachers from all over the province are contracted to mark Diploma Exams and Achievement Tests. Contracts are rotated each year to involve many teachers and to broaden awareness of the assessment standards.
- Beginning in 1995, teachers were allowed to mark their own students Achievement Tests.

- Samples of student work from the provincial exams are returned to school boards with the analysis of exam results, and these samples also released to the public.
- Parent Guide in Achievement Tests was produced in 1995 and distributed to parents Grade 3, 6, and 9 students.

The focus group participants indicated there is a weakness in the communication of the established standards of acceptable and outstanding student achievement by Alberta Education. They believe that the public, including parents of students, are not aware of expected standards of learning. This issue has significant implications for the accountability mechanisms for the overall system of education which we discuss in Section 5.

Summary - Goal 1

Alberta Education has implemented a framework to enable progress toward this goal to be monitored. Curriculum focuses “education on what students need to learn”. Achievement of students is monitored through the provincial Achievement Testing and Diploma Exam program. High standards are communicated by involving teachers in marking exams and publishing samples of student responses. It appears, through our research and education stakeholder feedback, the Department has the appropriate mechanisms in place to attain this goal. However, there are issues identified with respect to the implementation on these mechanisms.

Focus group feedback suggests most curriculum outputs of the Department are valued. It may be possible to reduce some of the non-essential outputs supporting the key curriculum documents without negatively impacting satisfaction levels at the school level. Education stakeholders indicated that supporting the implementation of existing curriculum should be a priority.

A major concern impacting Alberta Education's effectiveness concerns the implementation of provincial testing of student achievement. The Department should work with the other education stakeholders to enhance the understanding and support of the provincial testing program. There appears to be a lack of consensus amongst education stakeholders as to the objectives of the provincial testing program. Some lack of support for the program can be attributed to the lack of timeliness of the Achievement Test results, and other implementation issues. The Department should work with the other education stakeholders to clarify the objectives of the

program, and to identify and resolve contentious implementation issues.

As further evidence of a communications issue, education stakeholders indicated parents and public do not have a good understanding of the high standards. Without broad understanding as to what the standards are, people are unable to judge whether an acceptable number of students are meeting or exceeding the “high” standards. The Department should develop a plan to increase the understanding of “high standards” of education in Alberta amongst parents and the public.

Goal 2 - Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/community involvement in education.

This business plan goal is aimed at increasing parental and community satisfaction with education in Alberta by enabling increased freedom of program choice, and at increasing parent and community involvement in decision-making at the school level.

In support of this initiative, the government enacted changes in legislation to: establish School Councils; open boundaries within the public education system thereby enabling students to attend any public or separate school of their choice; and to pilot Charter Schools. Alberta Education supported these changes with various policies, guides and handbooks. Another key element in increasing parental choice in programs is “distance education” so students may complete courses of study not offered in their school. Alberta Education develops distance education course curriculum, and also operates the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

We obtained feedback from education stakeholders on the implementation of the above initiatives and have summarized their feedback by initiative.

Goal 2 Implementation Issues

School Councils

The School Act was amended and a supporting Regulation developed to recognize and reaffirm the right of parents and the school community to have a meaningful involvement in the education of their children through school councils. The role of

school councils is to advise and consult with the principal. The School Act requires that "a school council shall be established...for each school operated by a board". The School Councils Regulation requires that each school council must be established no later than February 15, 1996. The Department issued a School Council Handbook in April 1995 to assist in the implementation of School Councils in all schools.

We received significant feedback on the implementation of school councils, and the focus group comments are:

- Formal regulations relating to school councils could be a perceived barrier to parent involvement in their school.
- Parent Councils were in place in many schools and operating effectively, before the School Act was amended to require each school to have a School Council.
- There are too many "shalls" (regulations) issued by Alberta Education which hampers the effectiveness of this initiative. For example, focus group participants cited a number of administrative burdens that impede their perception of effective involvement.
- How will Alberta Education "penalize" School Councils, which are voluntary organizations, if they do not adhere to the regulations?
- Many education stakeholders were concerned about the cost to school boards to support the establishment and on-going effective operation of the required School Councils (e.g. training on operation, powers, etc.).

Open Boundaries

The School Act now permits students to attend any public or separate school of their choice, as long as space and resources are available. If a student chooses to attend a school in a school board outside the jurisdiction he/she resides, the full provincial funding follows the student to the new separate or public school board. Some of the issues raised in the external focus group sessions with respect to open boundaries are:

- Choice is not really available in rural areas, because transportation is only partially funded, and distances between schools are often large.

-
- The “as long as space is available” provision in the School Act has the potential of being abused by some school boards and Schools to limit true choice.
 - Some of the smaller school boards believe that open boundaries and funding following the student is an issue for students with “severe” special needs. They feel the funding for these students is often insufficient in relation to the cost of providing an educational program, and their smaller operating budgets do not have room to adjust for unexpected arrival of such students.

We believe the above issues are environmental conditions in an open boundaries model that arise for practical reasons. It is impractical to expect the same degree of choice of schools and programs in rural and urban areas, and it would be uneconomical to transport rural students to any school of their choice.

Charter Schools

The School Amendment Act, 1994 was proclaimed as law in May of 1994, and provided for the establishment of charter schools in Alberta. The Charter Schools Regulation limits the number of charters the Minister may approve to 15. Currently, five charter schools have been approved, and three schools began operating in September 1995. The Department prepared and released a Charter School Handbook in April 1995 to support the approval and establishment of charter schools.

Several focus group participants noted it is easier to convince an existing school board to design and offer a special program than it is to establish a charter school, because of the amount of regulations governing the establishment and operation of charter schools. Some participants commented the effectiveness of charter schools is not yet known.

Distance Education

Alberta Education is currently responsible for developing distance learning curriculum, and for providing direct service to students through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC). The Department spends approximately \$1.7 M on distance learning curriculum, and \$5.1 M on ADLC. These amounts are approximately 3% and 10% of the Department’s total operating budget.

Generally, focus group participants supported distance education as an element of program choice. This support was strongest from education stakeholders in rural areas.

Some education stakeholders questioned whether the provision of distance learning programs was an appropriate role for the Department. In focus group feedback, distance learning as a role for Alberta Education was rated by participants as being of relatively low "appropriateness". The merits of the Department being involved in this role could be evaluated.

Summary - Goal 2

The main mechanisms to facilitate greater parental choice and parental/community involvement have been established. However, based on education stakeholder feedback received, there is a concern about the amount of over-regulation in those areas. Although the main mechanisms are in place, an important issue is the degree to which parental choice and parental/community involvement is actually taking place. Alberta Education should monitor the implementation of, and review the effects of the "choice and involvement" on the system to ensure that the objectives of this goal are and continue to be attained.

In order to aid in the implementation of School Councils, the Department should monitor the relative success each school board has in implementing school councils. Best practices should be shared. The Department should watch for opportunities to centrally provide support needed by all school councils to limit total system administrative spending.

Implementation issues regarding open boundaries should be monitored to determine if the spirit of the School Act section is being compromised.

Goal 3 - Improve the Co-ordination of Services for Children with Special Needs.

Schools are often the main point of contact between children with special needs, and government departments and agencies that provide services to special needs children. These departments are the Departments of Education, Health, Family and Social Services, and Justice. This business plan goal addresses the problem of multiple departments and agencies dealing with the same special needs children in an uncoordinated approach. If their services are

not co-ordinated, children may not get the services they require, or alternatively the children may be interrupted so often it may impact their learning.

The key initiatives implemented by the Department to date in this area are:

- Released a "Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs" in 1995;
- Developed an Action Plan in consultation with other departments and the Commissioner of Children's Services in 1994; and
- In conjunction with the Departments of Health, Family and Social Services and Justice, implemented five pilot projects on Co-ordination of Services for Children with Special Needs; two are continuing as part of the initiatives of the Commissioner of Children's Services.

Alberta Education estimates that approximately \$0.8 M or 1.6% of its operating budget is allocated to this business plan goal.

Alberta Education Directors assessed the "appropriateness" and "effectiveness of implementation" of the tools in this area at or near the bottom of the seven categories. The Directors perceived the value of these tools to the other education stakeholders as being relatively high. They supported these ratings with comments that there has not been very many mechanisms developed in this area, but what has been done is valued by education stakeholders.

Superintendents, trustees, and secretary-treasurers assessed the appropriateness of the Special Education / Special Needs tools as being relatively low as compared to the other seven categories of mechanisms.

Generally, the external focus group participants believe that little progress has been made by the Department in co-ordinating the services for children with Special Needs. Some of the important comments received in this area are:

- Some of the proposals in the "Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs" will be costly and difficult to implement.
- Although the results of the five pilot projects are promising, they might not be fiscally possible, because these innovative delivery models may require additional operating funds.

- Inclusion of special needs students in the regular stream is perceived by some focus group participants to be a barrier to student learning.
- The funding framework provides additional funding for students with “severe” disabilities. Many focus group participants expressed concern the additional funding does not cover the costs associated with these students.
- As is contemplated in the Funding Framework, most school boards are differentially funding schools within their jurisdiction based on differing levels of students with “mild” and “moderate” disabilities (and other factors such as programs and occupancy issues). However, a few school boards are not making adjustments, and simply flow the provincial funding through to schools using the same per student amount as provided by the province.

Summary - Goal 3

To date, little has been done by the Department to “improve the co-ordination of services for children with special needs”. As only a small portion (1.6%) of the Department’s budget is directed to this goal the lack of progress is understandable.

We recognize that this is a challenging goal, because many of the services are provided by other government departments and agencies, which are beyond the control of Alberta Education. However:

- The Department should collaborate with the Departments of Health, Family and Social Services, and Justice to develop a long-range plan illustrating how to improve the delivery of services for children with special needs. Input on this plan should be obtained from people actually delivering service to the children with special needs, and the parents of these children.
- Innovative, non-traditional approaches to cross-departmental co-ordination should be pursued to ensure the provincial government “system” does not act as a barrier to attaining this goal. Historical approaches should be challenged, and the concepts of Business Process Innovation / Re-engineering should be employed to radically alter services in this area.

Goal 4 - Improve Teaching.

Teachers have a key role in ensuring that students “acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society”.³ Business Plan Goal 4 addresses the importance of teaching to student learning and development.

The key activities and relating to Goal 4 are:

- Process teacher certificates and maintain registry;
- Contract with various post-secondary institutions regarding Bachelor of Education requirements;
- Develop and issue various guides supporting and explaining teacher certification and evaluation (e.g. “Quality Teaching: Quality Education for Alberta Students”);
- Mediate disputes regarding teacher suspensions, etc.;
- Grant “Excellence Awards” for outstanding teaching; and
- Implement regional “Consortia” to broker professional development for teachers.

Feedback from internal Directors and external focus group participants suggests the Department has done little to attain this goal. However, both groups commented that it was appropriate for the Department to have a minor role in improving teaching. School boards, principals, teachers and the Alberta Teachers’ Association were seen to have the most significant role in attaining this goal. These comments fit with Alberta Education’s relatively low spending on Goal 4 (the Department estimates that approximately \$1.2 M or 2.4% of its operating budget is allocated to Goal 4).

Certification of teachers is the main sub-activity of the Department in Goal 4 (82% of Goal 4 spending). Generally, focus group participants said this activity contributes little to the improvement of teaching.

While there is mixed support for Alberta Education being the “registrar” of teachers. Some people feel Alberta Education has always done it, is good at it, and should continue to do it, while others feel that another group could effectively and efficiently assume the role of registrar. This difference of opinion is illustrated

³Meeting the Challenge II - Three Year Business Plan (1995-96 to 1998-98).

in the external focus group feedback which indicated trustees, superintendents, and secretary-treasurers believe "issuing teacher certificates" is an appropriate role for Alberta Education, and principals, teachers and parents who believe the appropriateness of Alberta Education's involvement in this role is low.

Some of the more specific comments from the focus groups are summarized below:

- Many participants stated that the discussion paper "Quality Teaching: Quality Education for Alberta Students" is a good framework, and a step in the right direction.
- Several participants questioned the wording of the goal. "Improve Teaching" implies there is a general problem with teaching. From education stakeholder feedback, it was suggested that the magnitude of the problem be determined by Alberta Education before a general goal like this is adopted for the system.
- There is general recognition there are few poor teachers, however, some school board administrators feel it is too difficult to remove poor teachers from the system.
- Alberta Education Directors believe that key components of the restructuring (e.g. School Councils, Provincial Testing, Open Boundaries) will facilitate the improvement of teaching.

Summary - Goal 4

To date, Alberta Education has implemented few mechanisms to attain this goal. The Department's "Quality Teaching" initiative is underway, but not yet completed. The discussion paper, "Quality Teaching: Quality Education for Alberta Students" was regularly praised by education stakeholders who commented it was a good first step.

Although the Department has implemented few mechanisms to attain the goal of "Improve Teaching", education stakeholders believe that Alberta Education's involvement is appropriately minimal. Education stakeholders suggest Alberta Education's role in improving teaching should be limited to pursuing "front-end" activities in this area which encourage and enable school boards, principals, teachers and the ATA to work at improving teaching.

While the Minister is ultimately responsible for the certification of teachers in Alberta, the current wording of Goal 4 implies the

Department has a direct role in improving teacher skills. As this is not the case currently, the Department should consider changing the wording of the goal to more appropriately reflect the Department's indirect role in improving teaching. As well, the Alberta Education role in this regard should be to provide objective information to the system on the magnitude of the problem and the relative success in accomplishing the outcomes for this goal.

The current performance measures for this goal are based on opinions of teachers and principals. These self-evaluation measures are somewhat useful in gauging one component of teacher skills and attributes. However, the Department should develop more objective measures of teacher performance.

The Department should consider recommending that the Minister review the role of "registrar" of teachers, and the appropriateness of alternative providers of this service.

Goal 5 - Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.

This goal is primarily aimed at changing the governance framework of education in Alberta to enable the system to operate more efficiently and effectively. The "governance system" is comprised of legislation, rules and criteria which dictate the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, Alberta Education, school board trustees, school board administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and students. It is important to note that all roles and responsibilities in education are interrelated.

Goal 5 Implementation Issues

The Department has implemented several key initiatives contributing to the attainment of this goal. Some of these initiatives are complete, while others are only partially implemented.

We obtained input from the education stakeholders as to the implementation of these initiatives, and this input is summarized below.

Number of School Boards

In the February 1994 Throne Speech, government announced its intention "to reduce the number of school boards and shift decision-making to schools, communities and parents". Effective January 1, 1995, the number of school boards in Alberta was reduced from 181 to 66. The number of school board trustees was correspondingly reduced from 1,169 to about 435.

We understand the regionalization or amalgamation of school boards was contemplated for a number of years, but limited progress occurred until the 1994-95 year. An "MLA Implementation Team" was created to obtain education stakeholder input on the "Amalgamation/ Regionalization of School Boards", and this team delivered its findings and recommendations to the Minister in 1994. The Department developed various guidelines and handbooks to assist school boards in managing the amalgamation / regionalization (e.g. "Guideline on Regionalization").

Generally, the focus group participants indicated to us that the regionalization of school boards was necessary for efficiency reasons, given the small size of many of the boards.

The Department has been successful in implementing this restructuring initiative, and little continuing work is required.

School-based Management

A key strategy of business plan supporting Goal 5, is "School-based Management is to be implemented by 1996-97".

To date, the Department's work in implementing School-based Management is the development and release of a policy on "School-Based Decision Making". This policy requires school boards to develop policies with respect to school-based decision making, include certain elements in their policy, and develop an in-service program to support implementation of school-based decision making.

Education stakeholders in our focus groups indicated some concern over how this government policy has been implemented, and also some concerns over the policy itself. These concerns were consistent amongst each of the various education stakeholders and across all regions of the province. Their key concerns are:

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- Notwithstanding the definition of school-based decision making in the policy, there is lack of clarity amongst education stakeholders as to what Alberta Education means by "School-based Decision Making". Education stakeholders indicated there is a continuum of local autonomy under a variety of school-based decision models, and Alberta Education has not clarified what exact level of school autonomy is expected under their policy. This is a good example of regular references to weaknesses in communications between the Department and other education stakeholders.
 - A significant amount of professional development will be required to enable principals to be successful in operating in a school-based decision making environment. Some education stakeholders believe that Alberta Education should have a direct role in supporting government policy, and either deliver or fund the needed professional development.
 - School boards trustees and administrators were varied in their support of this policy. Some indicated they intend to adopt the concepts as fully as possible, while others were clearly opposed to the concept and will implement only those elements required by Alberta Education.
 - Many of the education stakeholders questioned the feasibility of effectively implementing School-based decision making in all school boards by 1996-97. They often cited the experience of the Edmonton Public School Board, that has taken up to fifteen years to become effective in operating under a site-based management model.
 - Some of the education stakeholders questioned whether the model of school-based management has been empirically proven to enhance student learning.

The feedback from the focus group participants suggests the exact nature of how school-based decision making will be implemented in each school board and school will be highly variable. We understand that government intended to allow a certain amount of flexibility.

Roles and Responsibilities in Education

As part of the restructuring of the governance and delivery of education, the Minister of Education initiated an MLA Implementation Team to review the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the education community including Alberta

Education. This MLA Implementation Team worked with consultants to identify, clarify and document the appropriate roles and responsibilities and their interrelationships.

A position paper was released in December 1994, that was based on a public consultation process (in excess of 1,500 people), a Synthesis Report released in September 1994, and on the recommendations from the MLA Team. This position paper describes in some detail "who will do what" and "who will be responsible for what" when school-based management and school councils have been implemented fully.

Clearly understood roles and responsibilities are critical to the effective operation of a complex organizational system. This clarity must not only be on paper; it must be supported by behaviour.

The Roles and Responsibilities position paper is a good first step in clarifying the expected roles and responsibilities of each education stakeholder in the restructured education system. If the restructured education system is to reach optimal effectiveness levels, the Position Paper must be translated into behaviour. To ensure this occurs, Alberta Education should:

- Develop plans and actions to ensure all education stakeholders are aware of the Roles and Responsibilities position paper, understand their role and responsibilities, and generally agree with their role and responsibilities.
- Consider its legislated and documented roles and responsibilities, as well as those of the Minister and each education stakeholder when reviewing the affairs of any other education stakeholder.

Professional Development "Consortia"

Regional "Consortia" is a government initiative intended to support effective school based decision-making, school councils, and professional development of teachers and principals. Provincial funding has been allocated to these groups to encourage school boards and education organizations to work together to more efficiently provide these services. Guidelines have been established for up to six regional consortia in Alberta, and one region has been officially structured.

Some comments of the focus group participants on Consortia are:

- This is another example of perceived Departmental involvement in "process" which was questioned.

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- If the Department has a minimal role in Improving Teaching, their involvement in professional development was also questioned.

School Councils

School Councils are an important element in the restructuring of the governance and delivery of education in Alberta. The implementation strengths and weaknesses of School Councils has been described in the analysis of Goal 2, earlier in this section.

Technology in Education

This Goal 5 strategy is scheduled for implementation in 1997-98, but some activities have begun already. An MLA Implementation Team has been structured, "Business Involvement and Technology Education" to investigate and provide recommendations on this issue.

Some comments from education stakeholders relevant to the use of technology in the delivery of education in Alberta are:

- Alberta Education is lagging other provinces in the development of technology as a method of delivering education and supporting education.
- The technology available in each school varies widely; from state of the art to sub-standard.

Summary - Goal 5

Overall, the Department has been successful in implementing the major mechanisms and controls to attain this goal. The governance system has been restructured to create both increased efficiencies and effectiveness. The number of school boards has been reduced to 66, School Councils have been added, policies have been implemented to encourage school-based decision making, and the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in education have been clarified. In essence, the major work on this goal is complete. Into the future, Alberta Education should work to ensure the actual governance and delivery of education is consistent with government's vision of the restructured education system through meaningful outcome performance measures.

Goal 6 - Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.

This business plan goal addresses Alberta Education's responsibility to budget and allocate operating and capital funds to schools through school boards. The two important elements of the goal are the words "adequate" and "equitable".

The first element, "adequate", is beyond the direct control of Alberta Education. Total education spending allocations (approximately \$2.8 B in 1995-96) are set by government with advice from the Department, but in the context of total government spending.

It is important to note that "equitable" funding does not mean "equal". "Equal" funding means an identical amount of funding to each school board based on some volume criteria (e.g. per student). "Equitable" funding means an amount of funding to each school board, taking into consideration selected differences (e.g. rural vs. urban). "Equitable" funding recognizes that different school boards need more or less funding, depending on their geographic and demographic characteristics.

Goal 6 Implementation Issues

The Department has made substantial progress toward the attainment of this goal. The key accomplishments are summarized below, as is relevant feedback from the education stakeholders.

Full Provincial Funding of Education

A key element of improving and ensuring equity of funding between school boards was the change to the School Act enabling the provincial government to requisition local education taxes and thereby fully fund school boards. Prior to this change, the province funded on average 58% of the cost of education; the remaining 42% covered by the local revenues requisitions by school boards.

Property tax rates and assessment bases in each school jurisdiction varied widely across the province resulting in significant disparities in wealth among school districts. The level of total per student funding available to school boards varied widely, creating inequitable access to education programs and services. Before the province assumed responsibility for full funding of education, differences per student funding ranged from \$3,633 to \$22,582. In 1995, with full provincial funding, the range was narrowed and is now \$5,137 to \$12,078.

Alberta Education is now working with Alberta Municipal Affairs to develop uniform provincial mill rates for residential/farm properties and for non-residential properties (approximately 400 municipalities). These uniform mill rates began to be phased in 1995, and will be applied in 92% of municipalities by 1997. The 1997 uniform mill rates are targeted to be at or below the 1993 provincial average net mill rates.

Focus group participants strongly supported the increased equity of education funding. They indicated that lack of equity had been an issue for some time, and were pleased it had been finally resolved. There are some unresolved issues surrounding the current legislation which allows separate school boards to choose to continue to requisition local ratepayers, as evidenced by the ongoing litigation between a number of school boards and the government.

Funding Framework

The Department developed and implemented a new framework for funding school boards in the 1995-96 school year ("Funding Framework"). This framework was the culmination of the work of an MLA Implementation Team on the Funding Framework, as well as Alberta Education and various education stakeholders. It is built upon the key directions of government for restructuring the education system, and its principle of the efficient and effective use of education dollars. The Funding Framework Manual, School Capital Funding Manual, and the redesigned Budget Report Form reflect the principles of the "Funding Framework".

The new Funding Framework reduced the number of specific grants for particular programs and needs. It is based on three "blocks" of funding:

- Instructional
- Support
 - Transportation
 - Maintenance and Operations
 - Board of Trustees Administration
 - Central Services Administration
- Capital

Generally, focus group participants supported the new funding framework. The block funding concept is an improvement over

numerous targeted grants. However, education stakeholders did have some concerns regarding the Funding Framework. The key issues are:

- The Funding Framework is too “equal” because geographical differences between school boards are recognized primarily in the Instructional Block (“sparsity and distance”). The “Maintenance and Operations” element of the support block is based on student enrolment and square footage of schools, and is not adjusted for geographical differences. School board administrators indicated that maintenance and operations should also be adjusted for sparsity and distance, and geographic differences (e.g. it costs more to heat a school in Ft. McMurray than it does in Lethbridge).
- Some school board administrators questioned the need for three blocks. They believe a single block could be provided, and school boards could manage the allocation to initiatives at a local level.
- The data collection and verification processes for determining school board funding allocations are often cumbersome, involving substantial manual work and duplication, supported by the following education stakeholder comments:
 - Alberta Education requires the same or similar financial and student enrolment data to be submitted by school boards in multiple formats to a variety of branches;
 - The Credit Enrolment Unit process of allocating funds to school boards for high school students needs improvement because of the manual work effort required and the delays in processing year-end funding adjustments.
- Concern that the funding framework does not appropriately fund “severely” disabled students.
- Educational Information Exchange (EIE) project implementation is struggling, but it is viewed to be a positive initiative that will result in a reduction in manual re-keying of data.
- Capital funding to specific projects should be a responsibility of school boards.
- Although a policy issue, many education stakeholders viewed the administration “cap” as a deterrent to optimizing efficiencies within their school jurisdictions.

Goal 6 - Summary

The Department has been successful at implementing the immediate mechanisms to attain this goal. Education spending targets set by the government have been met in 1994 and 1995. Equity of school board funding has been increased, the Funding Framework has been adjusted to reduce the number of program/need-specific grants, and the phase-in of uniform provincial property tax mill rates has begun. These changes are the building blocks of equitable school board funding over the long-term. To ensure the objectives of this goal are attained and continue to be attained, Alberta Education should address the Funding Framework implementation issues raised by education stakeholders.

Goal 7 - Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.

Goal 7 is aimed at the internal workings of Alberta Education. The objective of this goal is to carry out government's commitment to restructure and become more streamlined; and to ensure that Department processes are aimed at attaining the business plan goals, and are efficient.

Goal 7 Implementation Issues

A number of changes to the Department have been implemented in the last few years to streamline processes and increase the focus on the business plan goals. We reviewed a number of these changes, and obtained input and comments from staff of Alberta Education and from other education stakeholders. The significant initiatives and focus group feedback is summarized below.

Department Budget and Staff Reductions

Alberta Education's operating budget was reduced 13.3% to \$50.1 M from 1992-93 to 1995-96. Over the same period the number of approved staff positions was reduced 19.6%. The majority of the difference between these percentage reductions is due to the elimination of vacant approved staff positions. We understand the 1996-97 operating budget will be approximately 30% lower than the 1992-93 operating budget (i.e., approximately \$39.4 M).

It is important to note that the Department's budget is only a small component (1.8%) of the total provincial spending on education of

\$2.8 B. Large percentage reductions in Departmental spending have limited impact on total system spending.

These budget reductions were achieved primarily through staff reductions and wage rollbacks, reduction in services offered by the Department and service fee increases:

- All full-time provincial government employees', including Alberta Education employees', salaries were reduced by 5%.
- The Regional Offices in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Grande Prairie were closed, and the Calgary and Edmonton Regional Offices were consolidated.
- The Materials Resource Centre (MRC) in Calgary was closed, and the Edmonton MRC was scaled down.
- The Alberta School for the Deaf was transferred to the Edmonton Public School Board, beginning with the 1995-96 school year.
- In 1995, fees were introduced for providing high school transcripts and for rewriting diploma exams, and the fees for teaching certificates were increased.

Focus group participants, both internal and external, are keenly aware of the reductions in Alberta Education's operating budget over the last three years. Generally, there is a recognition that operating efficiencies are being forced, because of the reductions to the Department's budget.

Focus group participants identified a number of processes where the Department's effectiveness could be improved. When identifying effectiveness issues, the participants often surmised that a contributing cause of the Department's ineffectiveness was the operating budget reductions. For example, lack of timeliness on the reporting of Achievement Test results was often attributed to "budget reductions". They also communicated a fairly consistent concern about the impact further budget reductions will have on effectiveness (e.g. curriculum).

Many focus group participants indicated the Department has not yet aligned its roles and responsibilities based on its current roles and fiscal realities. Some of the specific comments of participants supporting this issue are:

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- The Department may be involved in too many things. They should focus their efforts on their “core business” which was consistently defined by education stakeholders as:
 - equitable funding of school boards;
 - setting learning expectations;
 - monitoring student achievement.
 - Alberta Education demands for information of school boards are not co-ordinated.
 - The Department issues many regulations and policies that are aimed at “micro-managing” school boards.
 - Significant Department time is spent dealing with action requests and appeals to the Minister.

We believe that some internal efficiencies have been created by budget reductions. However, we concur with the external focus group participants, and believe that true efficiencies will only be created once the Department determines its appropriate role in the education system and the processes to support its role.

We understand the Department has undertaken a prioritization of its functions. We recommend this activity be continued, with further input sought from education stakeholders as to the roles most appropriate for the Department.

Business Plan Orientation

The Department has implemented several initiatives to align with the business plan goals and strategies:

- The 1995-96 budget was developed both from a traditional “functional” perspective, and from a “goal-oriented” perspective. Each Branch Director was responsible for allocating the Branch’s budget to the nine business plan goals. The results of the goal-oriented budget process are included in Appendix 2.
- Responsibility for each of the nine business plan goals is assigned to an Assistant Deputy Minister. Goal Co-ordinators (primarily Directors) are assigned to each goal. Shared responsibilities for strategies supporting each goal have been documented.
- The staff “Performance Management System” was revised to link to the business plan goals, and individual employee “Productivity Plans” were linked to the business plan goals.

- Public reporting of performance of the education system in 1995 (Provincial Results Report) was based on achievement in each of the nine business plan goals.

We believe these initiatives are good steps toward instilling a “goal-oriented” culture in the Department. Based on our experience with other Departments, as well as our experience with other organizations undergoing major change, these initiatives are positive. Of course, proper implementation of these initiatives will require ongoing monitoring and adjustment if they are to have a meaningful impact on the efficient and effective management of the Department.

For example, the goal-oriented budget process was completed for the first time in 1995-96. Our review of the initial allocations with the Department’s management identified the need to make several adjustments to the allocations. This is typical in the implementation of a new reporting system. As well, we recommended to the Department’s management that the 1996-97 goal-oriented budget be developed with fewer detailed sub-activities (see tables supporting the goal-oriented budget charts in Appendix 2). The next logical step to developing a goal-oriented budget is to track expenditures according to the goals. However, the cost of tracking expenditures compared to the benefits realized must be examined.

Reduction and Consolidation of Regulations, Policies and Forms

The number of ministerial Regulations applicable to ECS -12 education has been reduced by 21% from 1992 to 1995. The Department also updated the “Policies Regulations and Forms Manual” by consolidating three separate manuals and streamlining where possible.

Focus group participants generally acknowledged the reductions in ministerial Regulations. However, participants consistently and strongly indicated they believe there has been an increase in the number of Departmental policies, regulations and forms.

Education stakeholders believe the Department is regulating school board and school processes more now than in the past. Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers were the most concerned about the number of regulations, policies and forms in place. They indicated that not all important regulations, policies and forms are contained in the “Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual”, and cited examples of key regulations and policies that are contained in other manuals or documents issued by the Department.

Some specific areas highlighted by comments from the focus group participants illustrating their concern over the number and amount of the Department's controls, and mechanisms are:

- School Councils (formal rules a deterrent to parents);
- school board results reporting content and format;
- transportation regulations;
- disposition of property regulations for small items;
- school closure regulations restricting efficient regional management;
- calendar times, hours, etc.;
- Building Quality Restoration Program (unclear lines between capital and maintenance);
- restrictions on centralized services that are "program delivery" related such as psychological testing, purchasing, shared school assets; and
- the number of funding envelopes.

We understand the Department has made efforts to clearly distinguish between regulations and policies, and guidelines. However, feedback from the external focus group participants suggests that clarity can be improved or the Department's clarity improvement efforts can be better communicated. There appears to be a gap between what the Department believes are regulations and policies and what the other education stakeholders believe are regulations and policies.

The Department should continue to eliminate, consolidate and streamline the number of policies, regulation and forms. A similar process should be used to evaluate policies and non-legislative regulations that was used to reduce the number of Ministerial Regulations (i.e., challenge each from an external point of view, and determine if it is critical to the optimal effectiveness and efficiency of the education system). Input should be obtained from education stakeholders as to which regulations and policies should be eliminated which can build on the feedback from this study.

The Department should develop a plan to clearly communicate the "basic" regulations and policies to education stakeholders. Consolidating them in one manual is a suggested first step. Meeting

with superintendents to outline the Department's regulations and policies is recommended. Ensuring all staff in the Department clearly understand the difference between a guideline and a policy, and are familiar with the Department's regulations and policies will help improve the clarity of understanding amongst education stakeholders.

Data and Information Management

The Department has implemented several initiatives to automate the management of financial and student data both internally and between the Department and school boards. All student enrolment information and about half the high school course and mark information from school boards to Alberta Education is now transferred electronically.

The Department's "Electronic Information Exchange (EIE)" project is viewed by education stakeholders as a step in the right direction, but it is still struggling in implementation.

The Credit Enrolment Unit (CEU) tracking process is in need of improvement. School boards indicate the process is cumbersome, untimely and involves too much manual work.

Provincial Achievement Testing results were not released on a timely basis in 1995, and some analyses that were provided in prior years were not provided in 1995. Education stakeholders cited numerous cases where Alberta Education staff attributed the results delay to "the computer".

Basic Administrative Roles of Alberta Education

There are many roles in the education system the Department fulfils which are not addressed specifically in any Business Plan goals. Some of these roles must be provided by the Department so the Minister can fulfil his statutory responsibilities. We view these roles to be "basic administrative roles", such as:

- mediation and arbitration;
- financial reporting and budgeting;
- etc.

These basic administrative roles must be fulfilled by Alberta Education, and consume a portion of the Department's operating budget. As these roles are not discretionary, the Department is not

able to avoid allocating some of its operating budget to these roles. However, the Department should continually evaluate the amount of resources allocated to these roles in relation to the benefits derived.

Summary - Goal 7

The Department's operating budget has been reduced approximately 13% from 1992-93, and it is expected that the 1996-97 budget will be reduced approximately 30% from 1992-93. Within this context of reducing resources the Department is implementing the goals of government as documented in the Business Plan.

Alberta Education has implemented several initiatives to instill a "goal-orientation" in the Department. We believe these initiatives are a positive step in effectively and efficiently implementing the Business Plan.

While the Department has discontinued certain services, the Department continues to carry out legislated functions and fulfil other roles that are not in the Business Plan. Feedback from the education stakeholders suggests the Department needs to evaluate its suite of services in relation to its role in the system as defined in the Business Plan and the Roles and Responsibilities position paper. We recommend the Department continue to evaluate its continuing involvement in activities which are beyond the Department's documented mandate.

Despite the actual reduction in legislative regulations, education stakeholders perceive that on an overall basis the Department has increased regulations and controls of school board operations. As well, although the Department has made efforts to clarify regulations/policies from guidelines, feedback from education stakeholders suggests they continue to remain unclear as to regulations/policies ("musts") and guidelines ("shoulds").

Education stakeholders expressed concern about the Department's progress toward efficient data and information management, and regularly highlighted three processes that are in need of improvement: Electronic Information Exchange (EIE), Credit Enrolment Unit (CEU), and provincial testing results development and analyses.

Goal 8 - Ensure the cost of education is reasonable and under control.

This business plan goal is aimed at ensuring education system spending is within the targets set by government.

Goal 8 Implementation Issues

Alberta Education has successfully met the education system spending targets for 1994 and 1995. The Department is on track to meet the 1996-97 education system spending target of \$2.863 B. This amount is a 4.3% decrease from the 1992-93 education system spending of \$2.992 B.

During each fiscal year, Alberta Education monitors spending of its education stakeholders, and prepares quarterly forecasts of expenditures that are reported to Alberta Treasury and to the public. The forecasts are used to ensure budget targets are met.

Focus group participants recognize the need to ensure that education system spending meets the targets set by government ("under control"). However, many of the education stakeholders questioned the use of the word "reasonable" in this goal. They questioned the basis by which "reasonability" of education spending is or can possibly be evaluated. Points raised were whether reasonability is to be evaluated based on inter-provincial spending comparisons, inter-country spending comparisons, or on student performance (learning).

Summary - Goal 8

Alberta Education is attaining this goal by ensuring that education system spending is within the targets set by government.

Goal 9 - Ensure that the Education System is Open and Accountable.

Goal 9 is in keeping with government's commitment to be open, accessible and accountable. It is aimed at improving student learning by ensuring the public is regularly informed about the performance and cost of Alberta's education system

Goal 9 Implementation Issues

Substantial feedback was obtained in the focus group sessions regarding the Department's major "accountability" initiatives, and this input is summarized below.

Accountability Framework

In February 1994, the Minister of Education established an MLA Implementation Team on Accountability. The Team's mandate was to consult with Albertans and provide the Minister with recommendations on the results information people want and need to know about the education system, and how this information should be communicated and used to improve education. The Team's recommendations to the Minister are reflected in the "Accountability in Education Policy Framework" issued in June 1995, and the Guide for Developing School Board Three-Year Education Plans and Annual Results Reports issued in February 1996.

The policy framework and guides outline the requirements and implementation timelines for school board and school planning and reporting to improve accountability at provincial and local levels. This framework requires:

- School boards to include six of the nine provincial goals for education and eight of forty provincial strategies directly in their 1995-96 (and beyond) education plan and results report.
- School boards to report the following information in their November 1995 Annual Education Report:
 - achievement test results, grades 3, 6, and 9 compared with provincial standards and results;
 - diploma examination results, compared with provincial standards and results, including participation rates;
 - programs offered;
 - priorities and major initiatives; and
 - expenditure summary, including instructional expenditures as a percent of total spending.
- Schools to include three of the nine provincial goals in their plans and results reports.
- School boards to include five of twenty-nine provincial performance measures in their interim education plan and 1996 results report.
- School results reports, aligned with school board results reports, to be in place by November 1998, and include three of twenty-nine provincial measures.

The Framework also stated that school boards and schools should determine other strategies to meet local needs and additional performance measures to meet local planning and reporting requirements.

The Department supported the "Accountability in Education Policy Framework" by issuing: "Guide to Planning and Reporting by School Authorities".

Focus group participants were generally in favour of the spirit of "open and accountable education system", but there are a number of concerns with respect to the implementation plans contemplated in the "Accountability in Education Policy Framework". Their significant concerns are:

- School boards should be able to determine what goals and strategies should be undertaken in their jurisdictions, and they should not be mandated by Alberta Education; this is further evidenced by a lack of commitment of the nine goals established for the education system.
- The requirements for school boards and schools to conduct satisfaction surveys will be costly to develop, administer and report, and the benefit derived was sometimes viewed to be questionable. Some people suggested there may be opportunities for Alberta Education to assist in developing the satisfaction survey instruments on a provincial or regional basis.
- The accountability requirements are being introduced at the same time as controls on central administrative spending.
- Achievement test and diploma exam results should be publicly reported along with other key indicators, such as participation rates, special needs rates, native and English as a Second Language (ESL) rates, etc. to enable the public to understand the inputs to the provincial testing program.
- The media will always focus on the poor performing school boards and schools, and this will hurt the image of the public education system.
- General concern that diploma and achievement test results would be used to adjust provincial funding levels.

There is general support by education stakeholders to an accountability framework, but Alberta Education has not implemented the framework in a manner which generates

commitment from the other education stakeholder groups. The framework itself is an effective mechanism to accomplish this goal, however, an improved implementation process to gain greater commitment is required in the future.

Alberta Education Business Plan

The "business planning" process was announced by government in the August 31, 1993 Speech from the Throne. All departments, agencies and organizations receiving government funds were required to develop three-year business plans.

The significance of the business plan in promoting openness and accountability should not be overlooked. It is important the business plan be well communicated amongst all education stakeholders, and the goals and strategies are well understood.

Based on feedback from education stakeholders, to date there is variability in the understanding of the contents of the business plan. In addition, many of the education stakeholders indicated they lacked of commitment to the goals established for the education system as documented in the business plan. The business plan, while giving good direction to the system, is inconsistent in delineating what is government policy versus Alberta Education implementation strategies. For example, the business plan does not include the Funding Framework's administration "cap" which we understand to be government policy.

Reviews of School Board's Plans

The Department reviews each school board's education plan and corresponding performance measures, and provides feedback to school boards. The objective of this review is to ensure that school board plans "fit" within the provincially established plans for the education system.

Focus group participants had some concerns regarding the monitoring of school board plans:

- They believe Alberta Education has a "checklist" that guides the review. If that is the case, then the checklist should be provided to school boards prior to the development of local plans, to ensure that all mandatory items are covered.
- The monitoring of school board plans is not valued by some of the education stakeholders. School board administrators believe that Alberta Education's review is aimed more at form than

substance. As well, several examples were provided where the Alberta Education monitoring report was two to three times as large as the school board plan.

- Alberta Education reviews the education plan with the Superintendent, and requires the Superintendent to sign-off the school board education plan, even though it is the school board trustees who approve the plan. As a result, it was felt the School Board Chairman should sign off of the education plan. This process confuses the roles of Superintendents and elected school boards.

Provincial Results Report

In September 1995, the Department published the first Provincial Results Report on government's business plan for education. The Report contains a set of performance measures for the system. These performance measures are a combination of quantitative data and qualitative measures (satisfaction surveys).

We probed the focus group participants for feedback on the Provincial Results Report. Their key points are:

- Alberta Education has made a reasonable first effort to establish performance measures for the education system. However, the selected measures should be reviewed and adjusted to ensure the "right" things are being measured as well as commence a process of education stakeholder commitment to the measures.
- There is not broad awareness of the Provincial Results Report amongst education stakeholders. There were several suggestions that a booklet may not be the best format for such a report.
- Some education stakeholders believe the Provincial Results Report is too heavily weighted on opinion-based satisfaction survey results that can be manipulated by external influences such as the media.
- There is concern that temporal fluctuations in performance measures may not be statistically significant, yet such fluctuations may influence policy decisions of government.

In our view, the Provincial Results Report is a good start on public reporting of the outputs and outcomes of Alberta's education system. Over the next few years, Alberta Education should work with the other education stakeholders to collaboratively adjust the measures in the Provincial Results Report to ensure that the "right" things are

being measured. Accountability can only be achieved if the performance measures are communicated and understood by interested education stakeholders. Alberta Education should ensure that its communication strategy for the Provincial Results Report maximizes education stakeholder awareness and commitment to the measurement system.

Provincial Approval of Superintendent Appointments

The School Act was amended giving the Minister of Education prior approval of School Board Superintendent appointments. This amendment signals the Minister's responsibility for the education of students, and reflects the importance of the Superintendent's role in provincial governance.

The Department issued a guideline in 1995 explaining the process for obtaining Ministerial approval of a superintendent's contract. Although approval is a policy issue, education stakeholder feedback indicated this confuses the accountability relationship between school boards, superintendents and the Minister. This accountability issue will be dealt with further in Section 5 of this report.

Summary - Goal 9

The Department has implemented several key initiatives to ensure government's commitment that the education system in Alberta become more "open and accountable". The Provincial Results Report was issued for the first time in 1995, to report on the system's progress toward attaining each of the business plan goals. "Accountability in Education; Policy Framework" outlines government's policy on accountability in education. Guides were developed based on the requirements of the framework to ensure that School Board and Accredited Private School Interim Education Plans align with the provincial business plan for education and that Annual Education Reports specify performance information.

There is increasing information available to the public about how the education system spends its money, and what results it achieves. However, simply creating and providing information will not ensure "accountability". There needs to be enhanced communication and commitment to the measurement system as well as an overall commitment to accountability by all education stakeholders and true comparability of results so that relative performance can be judged by recipients of education services.

The Department has not yet done enough in assisting the public and other education stakeholders understand the cost/benefit of the accountability framework. The Department should continually monitor the “cost of accountability” in relation to the benefits. The methods by which the Department demonstrates its accountability to Albertans should be dynamic and respond to the needs of Albertans. As well, Alberta Education should consider the cost of the “accountability” requirements placed on school boards. Over time, the accountability needs of the public will shift; and the education system should correspondingly shift its accountability approaches. This will ensure that the system is always providing “accountability” at a cost that is justifiable based on the public’s demands.

5.0 Principles of Effective Governing Systems

Relevant to our terms of reference, Ernst & Young was engaged to assess the mechanisms Alberta Education currently uses to achieve the goals and strategies outlined for the education system. These mechanisms are specific to the nine goals, as outlined in the business plan and are discussed in Section 4. There are relatively few mechanisms, however, that are used to govern the overall system of education in Alberta and to ensure the optimization of goals and goal-directed behavior of the various education stakeholders (Alberta Education, school boards, superintendents, principals and teachers, parents and students) relative to the education system.

In order to answer the question of whether Alberta Education has the mechanisms to effectively govern the education system as a whole, it was necessary to establish, at the outset, a set of principles and characteristics of effective governing systems. The principles comprise a framework upon which to assess the effectiveness of the current mechanisms utilized by Alberta Education in its governance role for the overall education system. The terms "governing system" and "education system" are intended to relate to the complex relationship between and among key education stakeholders in the system, all of which are focused on the same or similar goal of optimal learning for children and society.

The general framework which we have utilized to assess the mechanisms relative to the overall governing system contains the following characteristics:

- There must be a clear vision of the future state which the goals are intended to address;
- There must be effective communication of the vision, goals and system outcome expectations in support of the goals;
- The mechanisms must create incentives for goal-optimizing behavior among all of the various stakeholders in the education system;
- In order to ensure a focus on accountability, there must be effective evaluation and feedback loops to continuously monitor and report on the performance of the various education stakeholders in the system; and

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- there must be an efficient information system that provides "the market" (in this case, parents, students, and the general public) with information which can be used to judge the effectiveness of direct service providers and Alberta Education.

Based on these characteristics, governance mechanisms must ensure there is understanding of the common vision, clarity of roles and responsibilities for accomplishing the vision, authority, and responsibility for undertaking these roles, and a clear accountability for outcomes.

A major issue facing Alberta Education in its role, is the need to ensure an effective governing system is maintained to meet the needs of education stakeholders. Alberta Education's primary task is to ensure the effective alignment of the activities of the education stakeholders to the goals for the system. As evidenced from our research, these stakeholders have different, and at times, competing interests from Alberta Education and frequently different or divergent means and opinions in pursuing those interests. This systemic reality highlights the fundamental issue whether Alberta Education should control the means of education service delivery, or whether Alberta Education should concentrate its focus on the management of outcomes of the system.

Alberta Education, with a few exceptions, is not in the business of direct delivery of education services to students. As an organization, it relies upon others to accomplish goals and outcomes. Given this fundamental characteristic of the Alberta education system, the Department needs to understand what mechanisms can help it accomplish its role in the system. The choice of mechanisms is made more difficult by the constrained resources of Alberta Education, which limits its ability to "be everywhere" in a monitoring capacity.

As outlined in Section 3 of this report, the education system in Alberta is characterized by an implicit and legislated principal/agent relationship between the Minister of Education and School Boards. The role of Alberta Education in this relationship is to carry out the government's responsibility for education under the direction of the Minister. The department administers legislation, regulations and policies, and must develop mechanisms which optimize the principal/agent relationship. The principal/agent framework suggests that information be provided to the key education stakeholders, students, parents, and the general public who in turn help to hold the

agents (school boards) accountable for outcomes. Accordingly, Alberta Education must have effective governing mechanisms that clearly and consistently report outcome measures to enhance accountability of school boards (agents), as the primary means of service delivery.

An effective governing system must ensure school boards understand what they are to be held accountable for; clearly articulate the vision and roles of the various parties within the system; and use information to align the behavior of all parties in the system. The foundations of an effective governance system are:

- **Accountability** - there should be a clear accountability for outcomes provided by the organization delivering the service;
- **Responsibility** - the organization responsible for delivering the service should clearly have the responsibility for determining the best means of delivering that service relative the best educational interest of students; and
- **Openness** - only through open, consistent, timely and relevant feedback can the organization delivering the service be held accountable for the outcomes.

Our assessment is that Alberta Education has effectively governed the change process to date. Developing and implementing a framework of clear accountability and clarity of the principal/agent relationship is fundamental to enhancing effectiveness of Alberta Education in the future.

In our series of focus group sessions with education stakeholders, and through our assessment of the mechanisms by which Alberta Education governs the system, a number of issues relative to the clarity of roles, responsibility and accountability within the education system were identified. These issues are grouped under the following key principles of effective governing systems:

- Communication;
- Accountability; and
- Clear Vision and Commitment.

5.1 Communication

Fundamental to an effective governing system is clear communication of roles, responsibilities, expectations and accountability. Strong governing systems have effective four-way communication (up, down, across, out) among all those involved in the education system.

A significant area in which Alberta Education has been less than effective, is in communicating the goals of the education system and their supporting rationale. The Department has not developed effective communication processes to facilitate consultation and communication throughout the education system.

Feedback we received in our research, essentially focuses on the following points:

- the timeliness of external communication is seen as an area of great opportunity for improvement;
- there is a perception that policies/guidelines are often rushed, leading to frequent revisions and restatements;
- true consultation with education stakeholders, as defined by an ability to impact decisions, has been inconsistent and/or lacking;
- the focus in communications has been on providing information versus facilitating consensus and commitment to the goals of the system;
- the medium, message and distribution of communication is unfocused and uncoordinated and sometimes inappropriate for specific target audiences;
- there is a strongly held perception that consultation between Alberta Education and the other education stakeholders does not result in any real impact or alteration of Alberta Education programs or policy design;
- Alberta Education sends information directly to schools which is a major issue in the line of accountability within the education system;
- the behaviour of Alberta Education in the past has been directive and competitive versus consultative and open, resulting in ineffective consultative processes. True consultation requires a degree of humility; communications must be two-way.

To some extent, the significant issues addressed by education stakeholders are a function of the major changes which have occurred in education governance over the past two years. To a certain extent, any message would not be greeted well given the pace, magnitude and direction of change which has impacted school boards and other education stakeholders generally in the education system.

The fact remains, however, that communicating the vision and message for the education system in Alberta remains a major function for Alberta Education and an area which the Department has significant improvement opportunities. Given that in both corporate and public sector organizations, there is a general lack of trust for a message from "head office" to the "field", significant efforts must be made by Alberta Education to administer the communications of the overall direction for the system in a more positive, consultative, and focused manner. There is a feeling among education stakeholders that Alberta Education has not been looking for consensus in the change process. As well, the overall message has not been clear and the consultative processes are perceived as weak by education stakeholders.

As a major step to the improved communication for the Alberta Education system, there must be a very clear and consistent vision of the future that the Business Plan is addressing, and a true commitment to the change agenda fostered through a consultative process. While we recognize the communication is only one element of the overall system (in addition to clarity of roles and responsibilities, clearer accountability, and commitment to published goals), it is a fundamental role within the education system.

To improve communications, and thereby the effectiveness of Alberta Education, we recommend pursuing the following initiatives:

- Alberta Education should develop communications protocol which establishes the various media, messages and consultative process for various elements of the education system. Within this alternative is the need to identify different media for communications and pursue a formal consultation process on an ongoing basis to ensure optimal understanding occurs within all elements of the system.
- Alberta Education should improve its consultation with other education stakeholders in the field by:

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- having more in-person meetings between senior staff of Alberta Education and administrative staff of school boards;
 - creating a formal link between the communications directors of the Department and school boards;
 - meeting with senior school board administrators without a set agenda for change, i.e., work with stakeholders to develop a shared future vision for the education system in Alberta based on government's goals and directions.
- Place the onus on school boards to access information currently held by Alberta Education and make it their responsibility to access all the available information that is warehoused within Alberta Education. With this alternative, a significant change in culture within the overall education system must be nurtured and this would require education stakeholders to take more accountability for access to information and not rely on Alberta Education to "send out" information to the field (i.e., the onus is to access information versus wait for it).
 - As identified by other education stakeholders, Alberta Education must take ownership and responsibility for ensuring there is clarity of understanding of the roles and the various education stakeholders in the system; and that direction, form and intent of government policies are well communicated by the Department.
 - For each major change initiative being led by Alberta Education, a communication plan should be developed that identifies key messages, responsibilities and critical dates within the overall change process.
 - Form of a cross-functional team in Alberta Education to analyze all information exchange points between the Department and school boards and develop specific ideas on how to enhance the communication process at each of these points;
 - Plan information release timelines on a 1, 2 & 3 year horizon, and keep education stakeholders informed of revisions to the timelines;
 - Encourage a change of culture to focus on "serving" other education stakeholders;
 - Build consensus within Alberta Education as to the strategies of Alberta Education administration.

As identified earlier in this section of this report, Alberta Education must ensure an open flow of communication to enhance

accountability within the system. Currently, the communication processes within Alberta Education and outward to the other education stakeholders are weak and must be significantly improved to enhance the effectiveness of the Department overall.

Clarity Between "Musts" (Required) and "Shoulds" (Suggestions)

A specific example of the lack of clarity in communication, and a symptom of the unclear roles and responsibilities within the education system, is the lack of clarity over what are required regulations and policy as established by the Alberta government and what are overall guidelines the Department issued to assist school boards in the interpretation and implementation of government policy.

Among education stakeholders, we frequently encountered a lack of clarity and an inconsistent understanding of what school boards are required to do and what are only "guidelines" that help interpret the implementation of policy or issues within the education system.

While this is not a fundamental concern with the education system, it is symptomatic of the lack of clarity that we have addressed above.

It is, therefore, our recommendation that the Department pursue the following alternatives:

- Eliminate the distribution of all "guidelines" to school boards, and make the access to guidelines the option of a school board.
- Investigate eliminating the development and issuance of guidelines for matters involving delivery of education services. The development of guidelines is not only costly to the Department, but also symptomatic of the Department's desire to maintain control over the process of education, instead of establishing standards and developing outcome measures for the system.
- The Department should consider increasing consultation in the formation of mechanisms to implement government policy. The consultative process should optimize education stakeholder involvement to define:
 - nature and magnitude of the problem that government policy is addressing;
 - the range of alternatives available to address the problem;

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- the selection of the alternative(s) that best meets the needs of the system;
 - evaluation mechanisms to ensure the alternative is working.
 - Often, written guidelines are an insufficient means by which to educate education stakeholders on the intricacies of the implementation of government policy. We suggest the Department investigate alternative means of communicating policy implementation guidelines (i.e. choose communication media based on the nature of the information and target audience, e.g. written, electronic, video, in-service workshops, telephone, etc.)

5.2 Enhanced Accountability

Based on the education stakeholder feedback received during our research, it is evident there is a lack of understanding of the principal/agent relationship⁴ within the education system. As indicated in the effective governance framework, agency problems typically arise whenever there are parties with mutual responsibility for the achievement of goals, especially when there are different means available to accomplishing an overall goal.

Within the basic governance framework for education in Alberta, specified by the Minister, Alberta Education has two options available to manage the principal/agent relationship in the education system.

- The first is to manage the expected outcomes for the education system (“whats”) and focus on an efficient information system which provides the other education stakeholders with an understanding of whether the agent has accomplished the requirements of the system.
- The second option is to govern the behavior of the agent, or in this case, control the process and methodology of education (“hows”) in order to achieve the expected goals of the system.

During our research, education stakeholders identified a number of issues that clearly point to the Department having both an outcome orientation and a process orientation towards management of the principal/agent relationship. In our view, whenever the Department

⁴ Our analysis of the agency relationship is from a strategic management perspective and is not intended to comment on the legal relationship between groups.

undertakes to manage process, it is removing the accountability of the agent, insofar as it is disempowering the agent from determining the best means available to accomplishing the overall goals given local autonomy.

We understand certain “process” controls are required to ensure the basic essential elements of education are uniformly provided throughout the province (e.g. minimum instructional hours). There was strong support from education stakeholders for the Minister specifying a few basic “rules of the game”. However, the education stakeholders believe there is opportunity to reduce some non-essential “process” controls without negatively impacting student learning

What is clearly lacking for Alberta Education in governing the principal/agent relationship is a set of incentive mechanisms that produce goal optimizing behavior among the diverse set of agents (school boards) in the province. At this time, given the equitable funding formula, there are a limited number of rewards available to school boards for optimizing goal directed behavior relative to the expected outcomes.

As well, Alberta Education has infrequently engaged in corrective actions and consequences with school boards that are not meeting expectations relative to the goals of the education system. Finally, Alberta Education lacks any disincentives to inappropriate behavior, in that it is very limited (in a political sense) in its ability to rest control from local school boards in the event of ineffective or inappropriate accomplishments relative to goals. We categorize this as Alberta Education being at two extreme ends of the control continuum, i.e., either having limited or no power to manage the behavior of the agent, or having the use of a “hammer” through the Minister’s ability to dismiss a school board or to either not appoint or re-appoint a superintendent.

Given that the roles and responsibilities of each education stakeholder have been documented through the work of the MLA Team, we believe attention must be directed to developing mechanisms for accountability within those roles. These mechanisms should provide for progressive corrective actions and consequences when expected outcomes of agents are not achieved. An example of such a process might include the following progressive mechanisms when expected outcomes are not attained:

- 1) Investigation of the problem;

- 2) Requirement for a remedial plan to be tabled with the Department; identify potential ramifications of plan not being attained;
- 3) Increase Department involvement in administration (e.g. approval of decisions/budgets);
- 4) Inform local electorate of continued problem; and
- 5) Remove Superintendent and/or the School Board.

To enable the progressive corrective actions and consequences process to be implemented, Alberta Education should further refine, through a consultative process (to ensure a high degree of “buy-in”), specific measures of performance that clearly outline effective performance of school boards.

Further, once accepted measures have been established, resources of the Department should be directed to ensure performance information is clearly available to education stakeholders on the effectiveness of school boards relative to the goals of the education system.

We believe accountability of the system will be enhanced through a very effective performance measurement system, and open flow of information on the performance of school boards relative to the established measures. In this way, school boards will be free to engage in the most appropriate means for achieving goals, while the Minister remains responsible for establishing goals, standards and expected outcomes for the education system. Through an effective flow of information, education stakeholders can truly judge, in a market fashion, the effectiveness of the services they are receiving.

The above discussion describes a “vision” of the education system in Alberta where the Minister through the Department:

- governs the education system within the framework determined by the Minister (“rules of the game”);
- decides appropriate system outcomes;
- works with education stakeholders to develop acceptable performance measures for those outcomes;
- uses a progressive corrective actions and consequences system to hold education stakeholders accountable for attaining the measurable outcomes.

In this vision, aside from the “rules of the game”, some of which may have a process element, the Minister through the Department does not focus on “how” to achieve the desired outcomes, rather focuses on “what” the desired outcomes are and the measurements to be used to evaluate whether those outcomes have been obtained. This vision was regularly supported by education stakeholders in the focus groups, and we also believe it to be the appropriate vision for the Department.

However, before the Department can make any progress toward this vision, and focus primarily on outcomes (“whats”) as opposed to the process (“hows”), it is critical the Department work collaboratively with its education stakeholders to determine the appropriate performance outcomes for the education system and corresponding measures of outcome performance. Until such measures are developed and agreed to, the Department will be required to continue to specify many of the elements in the process (“hows”) of education.

If measures of expected outcome performance can be developed and agreed to, accountability of education stakeholders for decisions within their control will be increased. Education stakeholders will have the freedom to choose the methods by which to attain the expected outcomes, and they will be accountable to their public and the Minister. Along with that freedom, however, will come the need for education stakeholders to make the often difficult decisions associated with determining the process (“hows”).

5.3 Enhanced Commitment to the Goals of the Education System

As indicated in our framework, effective governing systems require a clearly articulated vision of the future state for their particular discipline and a shared vision among all education stakeholders which would ensure behavior and resources of all education stakeholders is directed toward the achievement of the future vision. The Business Plan, which articulates government's goals for the education system, appears through our research, to lack the sufficient commitment among all education stakeholders in the education system and ownership for these goals is, therefore, diffused and lacking.

Based on our research, the level of commitment to the nine goals of Alberta Education varies amongst education stakeholders. Their input suggests this is due to:

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- lack of meaningful external consultation in the development of the goals;
 - limited internal buy-in (i.e., within the Department) on the ability to achieve the outcomes inherent in each of the goals;
 - limited consensus as to the “meaning” of the goals.

We recognize Alberta Education has the task of implementing the goals mandated by the government. The strategies developed by Alberta Education involved limited meaningful consultation, and as a result there is varied buy-in to the goals and implementation strategies.

An example of this is the goal of “Improve Teaching” for the education system. Education stakeholders are unclear as to the responsibility for the attainment of this goal, the means by which it will be attained, as well as the accountability of education stakeholders relative to the goal. The Department has not clearly articulated the magnitude of the problem or the specific direction required to address the problem or attain the goal. Baseline measures have not been put in place which demonstrate that teaching is, in fact, a problem and improvement should, therefore, be the goal.

In order to address this lack of commitment to the goals of the education system, we recommend the Department pursue the following alternatives:

- Now that the restructuring of the system has taken place, an opportunity exists to work collaboratively with education stakeholders to build commitment to the goals through:
 - open communication processes, including direct one-on-one meetings with the Deputy Minister and specific education stakeholders to ensure that the Deputy has a feel for all of the issues that are relevant at the various points of education delivery;
 - a true consultative process with superintendents to discuss strategies, and performance measures through a purposeful input process;
 - ongoing regional meetings within the education system should be used to promote open discussion about goals for the education system, progress relative to the goals and future strategies to close the gap.

Summary of Governance Issues and Recommendations

As we have addressed in earlier sections of this report, the education system structure has been fundamentally altered over the past two years with the numerous initiatives pursued by government and implemented by Alberta Education. The governance issues which we have addressed in this section do not point to any significant breakdown of the governing system, but merely point to the need to:

- improve clarity between “musts” and “shoulds”;
- implement new communication processes to support goal-directed behavior of all education stakeholders;
- develop mechanisms for ensuring accountability for delegated responsibility of education stakeholders (e.g. accepted performance measures, and progressive corrective actions and consequences); and
- build commitment to the goals for the education system.

6.0 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

Alberta Education was given the responsibility to implement the government's agenda for change identified in Meeting the Challenge I&II and subsequent three-year business plans for education. The changes implemented were significant, and the pace of change was rapid. The Department is responsible for establishing appropriate mechanisms to ensure the Business Plan goals are attained.

The terms of reference directed us to assess two questions:

- Does Alberta Education have the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the goals set by government are attained?
- Does Alberta Education carry out its mandate in an efficient and effective manner?

With regard to the first question, our findings suggest on an overall basis the Department has been successful in implementing the major mechanisms to ensure school board actions align with provincial directions. For Goals 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 progress has been substantial, and the appropriate mechanisms have been implemented. Goals 3 and 4 have received limited attention to date, and few mechanisms have been implemented. Goal 1 is the key goal for Alberta Education, and it does not have a defined "finish line". Accordingly progress towards attaining this goal continually needs to be evaluated. Goal 7, relating to the Department's internal effectiveness and efficiency, is addressed separately below.

Our research, which involved internal department analysis, external education stakeholder consultation, and objective assessment, has identified a number of issues within each goal which, if addressed, would enhance the effectiveness of the implemented mechanisms.

In addition to the implementation issues identified for each goal, we identified several overall system governance issues which impact on Alberta Education's ability to align school board actions with provincial directions. These governance issues involve the themes of clear vision, effective communication, mechanisms for goal optimizing behaviour, evaluation and feedback loops, and efficient information systems.

With respect to the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Department, our research approach had a primary focus on external education stakeholder assessment of effectiveness and efficiency. A

number of operational and organizational issues were identified which impact on the Department's ability to achieve the directions set out in the Business Plan. These primarily relate to goal-activity alignment, internal cultural issues, and external communications processes.

The key strategic decision facing Alberta Education is whether to focus its mechanisms on the "processes" of education delivery, or whether to focus its mechanisms on the "outcomes" delivered by education stakeholders. External education stakeholders regularly and strongly indicated the system would be most effective if Alberta Education focused primarily on establishing standards for the system, and on monitoring outcomes. Currently, there is a mix of mechanisms, which confuses the accountability relationships between education stakeholders.

To effectively implement a governance system that is outcome focused, the Department needs to identify, using feedback from its primary client group (students, parents and the general public) and other education stakeholders, the appropriate measures of educational outcomes. Accountability mechanisms, such as comparable results reporting and consequence management, must be determined in relation to the accepted outcome measures.

Key Recommendations

While we have made many recommendations throughout our report regarding the implementation of government policy as documented in Alberta Education's business plan, we believe there are several key recommendations that deserve the Department's initial consideration:

Reduce "Process" Controls

We recommend the Department identify and review the School Act, supporting regulations, departmental policies and guidelines ("mechanisms") to identify those that are directed at the "process" of education delivery. Mechanisms aimed at "process" should be reduced, where they are believed to have limited impact on the outcome performance of the education system.

To further increase the outcome orientation of the education system, acceptable measures of educational outcomes should be identified as previously noted. As well, appropriate corrective actions and consequences should be identified by Alberta Education to address poor performance outcomes and issues of non-compliance. Once

these mechanisms are in place, the Department should consider reducing remaining "process" controls.

Improve Internal and External Communication

We believe there is opportunity to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the education system by improving the communication between branches and divisions of Alberta Education (internal), and between Alberta Education and its education stakeholders (external). To improve communication, we suggest Alberta Education consider a number of initiatives.

To improve internal communication, the Department should encourage a "sharing of information" culture within the Department by openly discussing, between divisions and branches, issues, challenges and plans affecting the entire Department. Senior management should consistently repeat the same themes to all staff to ensure the organization clearly understands government's vision and goals for the Department and the education system.

External communication would be improved by, prioritizing messages and reducing volume of information communicated to education stakeholders. We encourage the Department to continually evaluate and select the most appropriate media (based on the target audience) to increase the effectiveness of external communication. We understand the Department is introducing the use of various new media (e.g. CD-ROM, Internet, etc.) to communicate with the general public and other education stakeholders.

Build Trust Between the Department and Other Education Stakeholders

We realize the education system in Alberta has undergone a significant amount of change in the last few years. As with any major change initiative, relationships become strained, which if ignored, can become detrimental to overall system performance. Now that the majority of change initiatives have been implemented, we recommend Alberta Education work at strengthening the relationships between the Department and its education stakeholders. Some of the initiatives the Department might consider include:

- promote open discussion between the Department and Trustees and Superintendents of the directions for the education system;
- increase the frequency of meetings between senior staff of Alberta Education and administrative staff of school boards; and

- meet with Superintendents regionally without an agenda.

Develop “Guidelines” Only if Market Demand is Sufficient

Alberta Education produces guidelines to assist education stakeholders in implementing government and Department policies. By their nature, guidelines are directed at the “process” of education delivery. Based on feedback obtained during the study, education stakeholders attach varying levels of value to guidelines. As well, guidelines appear to contribute to confusion amongst education stakeholders as to what are government’s policies (“musts”) and what are Alberta Education guidelines (“shoulds”).

Given that some of the guidelines developed by Alberta Education are valued by education stakeholders, there is a “market” to be served by the Department. Where there is sufficient demand indicated by education stakeholders, the Department should continue to develop guidelines. We believe there is opportunity to limit the number and scope of guidelines from that currently supplied, if guidelines are only developed and issued where there is sufficient market demand.

Create a Stronger “Department” Focus by Breaking-Down Functional and Cultural Barriers Within the Department

To ensure the Department’s overall efficiency and effectiveness is optimized, we recommend the Department work at increasing the focus on the Department’s objectives and goals, as opposed to divisional and branch objectives and goals. Some of the initiatives that might be pursued to create a stronger “Department” focus are:

- Build an understanding amongst staff, divisions and branches that everyone in the Department is “mutually accountable” for the attainment of the goals in the Business Plan.
- Work at instilling a “client service” orientation throughout the Department. Clients are both external (education stakeholders) and internal (divisions and branches).
- Continue to increase the management of the Department’s operating budget and spending in accordance with the Business Plan (goal-orientation).
- Review the organization structure to ensure it optimally and logically facilitates the roles and responsibilities of the Department;

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- Continue creating common understanding throughout the Department (all functions and levels) as to the key strategic objectives and operational strategies flowing from the Business Plan.

Focus Department Efforts on Core Functions

The Department's operating budget has been significantly reduced over the last few years. In light of these and potential future operating budget reductions, the Department should continue to prioritize the functions of Alberta. Where necessary, Alberta Education involvement in non-core functions should be reduced or eliminated.

Address the Perceived Lack of Clarity Amongst Education Stakeholders and Departmental Staff as to Alberta Education Policies ("Musts") and Guidelines ("Shoulds")

External education stakeholders indicated to us in our focus group sessions, they perceive a lack of clarity between Alberta Education Policies ("musts") and Guidelines ("shoulds"). Further the external education stakeholders indicated they perceive the Department's staff is unclear themselves as to what are policies ("musts") and what are guidelines ("shoulds"). We recommend the Department work at clarifying this perception.

Continue to Maintain Focus on Outcomes and Accountability

Alberta Education has made substantial progress in increasing the focus of the education system in Alberta on outcomes, and the accountability for those outcomes. We recommend the Department continue to implement mechanisms that enhance outcome measurement and accountability.

Continue to Develop Well-Respected Curriculum

Feedback we received during our assessment regularly identified Alberta Education as being a well-respected and competent leader in the area of curriculum development. Feedback we received indicates curriculum development is a core function of the Department, which should be maintained and built upon.

Further Clarify the Agency Relationship Between the Minister and other Education Stakeholders

The School Act divides the legislated responsibility for education between the Province and local school boards as agents of the Minister. The School Act balances the powers and responsibilities of the province with the power and responsibilities of locally elected school boards. It recognizes that the strength of Alberta's education system lies in strong leadership and commitment to education at both the provincial and local levels.

Optimal system performance can only be achieved where each education stakeholder clearly understands their role, responsibilities and accountabilities in the system. We recommend Alberta Education continue to clarify and document the agency relationship as defined by legislation, as well as clarify the interrelationship of roles and accountabilities among education stakeholders.

Appendix 1 - Input-Output Models

GOAL #1: Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
- Stakeholder input on curriculum, and "Learner Expectations" - School Board Design of Curriculum where no provincial standard exists - Results of Achievement and Diploma Exams - Changes in Society and Technology - Student results submitted by School Boards (courses completed, marks, etc.) - Provincial Results Report Satisfaction Survey Results	- Develop Curriculum (7 Stages): - Needs Assessment - Initial Proposal - Development - Proposal - Authorize - Implement - Maintenance and Evaluation - Coordination on Western Protocol (curriculum for Western Canada) - Native/Special Education Curriculum Adjustments - French Curriculum Adjustments - Select/Design Appropriate Learning Resources (with Teacher input) - Develop Distance Learning Materials - Validate School Board Designed Curriculum - Develop Achievement Tests for Grades 3, 6, 9* - Develop Diploma Exams** - plan - approve examination blueprints - develop exam questions - construct and administer field tests - analyze and revise questions - construct the exam - approve the exam - print and administer the exam - mark the exam - analyze and report the results * Grade 3 - English and Math; Grades 6 & 9 - English, Math, Social, Science ** 11 courses x 3 offerings per year = 33 tests	- Regulations and policies regarding provincial curriculum and student evaluation - Program of Studies K-6, 7-9, 10-12 - Technical Statements of Learner Expectations - Results-based - Guides to Education - Lists of Approved Learning Resources - Guides to Curriculum Implementation (eg. CTS) - Consultation Services to School Boards (Regional Services) - Achievement Test and Diploma Examination results communicated to School Board, Schools, Public (including analyses) - Samples of Student Work - School Board Plan for Improvement - Guide on Classroom Assessment Standards for non - 3, 6, 9, 12 (96/97) - Achievement Test: - 1/3 of questions new each year - Diploma Exams: 22 new each year 11 partially re-used 33 Diploma Exams per Year

GOAL #1: *Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.*

(continued)

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
	• Administer National/International Assessment Tests • Participate in the Development of National/International Assessment Tests • Approve Superintendent Contracts • Develop CAMP - Classroom Assessment Materials - non 3, 6, 9, 12 • Develop and Implement Policies with respect to provincial testing (eg., who must write) • Maintain Student Records and Process Transcripts	

GOAL #2: *Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/community involvement in education.*

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
• Government Policy/Direction • Diploma/Achievement Exam Results to enable stakeholders to evaluate school performance • Consultation with Stakeholders • Ministerial Action Requests	• Develop and Implement policies, regulations, legislation to promote parental choice and parental/community involvement, eg.: - open boundaries - funding follows the student - School Councils - Charter Schools - school-based management - home schooling - alternative schools within existing School Boards • Provide Distance Learning Curriculum and Instruction • Restructure the Funding Framework (block funding) • Respond to approximately 2,000 Ministerial Action Requests • Coordinate with various interest groups on choice and involvement • MLA Implementation Team Review of Business and Community Involvement in Schools	• Legislation, Regulations and Policies enabling parental choice and parental/community involvement • 15 Pilot Charter Schools • Funding Framework • Various "Handbooks" providing information on parental choice and parental/community involvement: - School Council Handbook - Charter School Handbook - Roles and Responsibilities in Education • Alberta Distance Learning Centre Programs

GOAL #3: Improve the coordination of services for children with special needs.

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
• Special Education Advisory Committee (12 Special Needs Associations) • Special Education Forum • Action Requests • Parental Inquiries and Appeals • Provincial Results Report Satisfaction Survey Results	• Liaise with the Departments of Family & Social Services, Health and Justice through Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee • Liaise with Commissioner of Services for Children on the redesign of provincial services for children • Meetings of the Alberta Education Interdivisional Children's Services Working Group re: Goal 3 • Develop an agreement with Alberta Health for the funding and delivery of health and related support services for students • Implement 5 pilot projects with other Government departments of innovative delivery models for students with special needs • Monitor School Board plans re: Special Needs Coordination • Develop policy on School Authority's approach to dealing with children with special needs • Preparation and distribution of descriptions of "best practices" regarding school-community collaboration • Operate the Alberta School for the Deaf • Conduct Special Needs Tribunals to resolve disputes between parents and School Boards • Act as lead department on the implementation of "Removing Barriers: An Action Plan for Aboriginal People with Disabilities" • Alberta Education Funding Framework provides additional funding to School Boards for "severe" handicapped students	• Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs • Developed a Draft Policy on "Services for Students and Children with Special Needs" • Five pilot projects on the coordination of services for children • In-service at Regional Meetings on Special Needs Coordination

GOAL #4: Improve teaching.

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
• Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (Teachers, School Boards, Trustees, Public) • "Toward Teacher Growth", 1993 Study • Parent complaints about teacher competency • Achievement/Diploma Exams • Provincial Results Report Survey Findings	• Certify teachers (new, transfers in, appeals) - issue 3 year interim certificates to new teachers - receive and review teacher evaluation prepared by School Board for new teachers • Maintain Registry of Superintendents • Contract with post-secondary institutions regarding B.Ed. requirements • Develop policies regarding teacher evaluation and competency • Reward outstanding teaching by providing "Excellence Awards" • Implement regional "Consortia" to broker professional development for teachers • Deal with complaints about teacher competency	• Approximately 30,000 certified Alberta Teachers • Discussion paper on "Quality Teaching: Quality Education for Alberta Students" (Knowledge Skills and Attributes) • Contracts with various post-secondary institutions re: Teacher Preparation • List of Superintendents • Teacher Evaluation Policy • Various guides supporting and explaining Teacher certification and evaluation

GOAL #5: *Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.*

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
• Education "Roundtable" public consultations • Government policy • MLA Implementation Teams - Roles and Responsibilities in Education - Amalgamation/Regionalization of School Boards • Surveys	• Implement school-based management framework • Reduce the number of School Boards from about 160 to about 65 • Develop guidelines/handbooks to support restructuring initiatives • Consult with public on proposed changes to the Education system • Revise legislation and regulations to support initiatives • Provide grant funds to stakeholder groups to assist in the implementation of new initiatives (eg. \$20,000 to Alberta Teachers' Association to provide in-service on school-based management) • Presentations to Superintendents/Trustees regarding government policy direction • Investigate and develop alternative methods of education delivery: - technology - off-campus instruction • Encourage School Boards to coordinate on the development and delivery of professional development ("Consortia")	• Approximately 100 fewer School Boards • Guideline on Regionalization • Policy on Superintendent Approval • Policy on School-based Decision Making • School Council Handbook • Resource Manual for School Councils (in progress) • Guideline on the Establishment of Professional Development Consortia • Roles and Responsibilities in Education Discussion Paper and Policy

GOAL #6: *Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.*

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
• Information Data Bases (tracking information re: School Board operations) • School Authorities Financial Information • Alberta Treasury • Municipal Affairs - mill rates • Statistics Canada • Consultation Feedback (Funding Framework, Others) • Funding Formula Data - square feet - student enrolment - programs • School Capital Plan • Appeals to Alberta Education by School Boards regarding funding constraints	• Collect education taxes from municipalities through the Alberta School Foundation Fund (ASFF) Levy • Equitably allocate funds to School Boards - operating - capital • Fiscal Policy Analysis - taxation, equalization, School Board operations - issue analysis - 3 Year Planning & Budget (Macro) - School Business Branch Financial Audits - School Authority Budget Report Forms - Ongoing consultations - feedback on funding framework • Public Reporting of Education Spending • Auditor General Audits of Alberta Education (6 per year) • Verify Student Enrolment • Develop Education Tax Rates (mill rates) for Municipalities • Approve Capital Project Plans and Allocate Capital Funding	• Funds to School Boards • Funding Manual • School Capital Funding Manual • News Releases • Capital Plan - announcement of approved projects • Budget Report Form • Program Accounting & Reporting Manual • Audited Financial Statement Forms • Education tax rates for 400 Municipalities • Position papers on Funding Education (2-3 per year) • Audit Reports on School Board Finances

Goal Resourcing 9
Original - Goal 7
- Goal 99 \$6.3M
Total \$15.7M
Revised \$6.3M

GOAL #7: Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
- Treasury Board Directives - Standing Policy Committee - Ministerial Directives - Stakeholder Opinion - Public Opinion - Private Sector - Restructuring Initiatives - Management Transition Team	- Review Department activities to identify core vs. non-core; Reduce or eliminate non-core activities - Budget Process - goal oriented - Alignment of resources and management processes to business plan goals (Lead Responsibility, Goal Coordinators for each goal) - Sponsor Productivity Improvement Initiatives: - DMIQI (DOC Management, Improvement Quality Initiative) - Internet Home-page - Develop Expenditure Tracking System by Goal - Develop Human Resources Performance Management System (PMS), that is tied to business plan goals: - organization - employee - decision making - Conduct staff surveys to identify opportunities for improvement - Management Evaluation System - External Audits (eg. Technology, Auditor General) - Deregulation Analysis - Internal Workshops on Business Plan Goals	- Each Business Plan Goal has been assigned to a Goal Owner and Goal Co-ordinator - Goal-oriented Department and Branch Budgets - Evaluation Classification System - More work done electronically - Reduced number of regulations and policies - Documented Goal Management Matrix - News Releases (government team restructuring) - Public disclosure

Goal Resourcing 95/96:
Original - Goal 7 \$9.6M
- Goal 99 \$6.1M
Total \$15.7M
Revised \$6.3M

#7: *Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.*

(cont'd)

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
	• Develop and deploy technological solutions to routine administrative processes (eg., Action Requests, Budget Preparation, Management-Staff Communication) • Operate various central support services - Accounts Payable - Printing Services - Mail Services	

GOAL #8: *Ensure that the cost of education is reasonable and under control.*

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
- Treasury Board - Education Spending Targets - School Board Budget Information (budgets, enrolment, etc.) - School Board Requests - Constituency Input (Action Requests saying Alberta is spending too much, too little)	- Ensure education system spending does not exceed Treasury Board target by developing quarterly forecasts and monitoring expenditure reports - Validate student enrolment numbers (confirm student forecasts) - Make credit enrolment unit adjustments to School Board funding - Monitor special line items and "administration cap" component on School Board budgets and BRF (eg. special needs, transportation, ESL, behavior funding) - Conduct financial audits of School Jurisdictions - Analyze cost unit data (inter-jurisdictional and inter-provincial) - Develop education fund requisition amounts and equalized mill rates for all Municipalities - Implement policies to reduce School Board spending on central administration	- Education system spending within targets set by Government - Equalized mill rates for Municipalities and requisition amounts - Education budget forecasts vs. actual expenditures for Treasury - Adjustments to School Board funding based on enrolment and/or credits - Reduced central administration spending by School Boards - Quarterly reports to public on education system spending

GOAL #9: *Ensure that the education system is open and accountable.*

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
- Multi stakeholder advisory committee on required performance measures - Performance Data (Alberta Education & School Boards): - Satisfaction survey - Student achievement data (national and provincial) - Course information (core vs. non-core) - Special needs survey - Financial and administrative information on School Board operations - Interprovincial comparisons - Government (Treasury) Directives - MLA Implementation Team on Accountability Framework - Internal workshops and technical committees - Literature search - Pilots on satisfaction surveys	- Provide input on Government's 3-Year Business Plan for Education - Develop & Distribute Provincial Results Report - Quarterly reports to government and Treasury re: Business Plan Goals - Prepare Alberta Education Annual Report: - achievement on business plan goals - audited financial statements - performance measures - Implement system improvement strategies based on provincial performance results - Conduct internal/external workshops and technical committees on performance measurements - Establish policies and expectations for School Board planning and performance reporting - Consider impact of other Alberta government department Business Plan on Alberta Education - Implement Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Legislation - Conduct comprehensive management reviews of School Boards (~20/year) - Update Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual - Approve 3-year contracts of School Board Superintendents	- Annual Report for Alberta Education - Provincial Results Report - Policy, Regulation and Forms Manual - Guides for School Board Education and Results Reporting Plans - News releases - Ministers' legislative report on local plans - Published performance measures (under Government Accountability Act) - Changes/refinements to Business Plan - Feedback to school jurisdictions on local plans and performance measures - Alignment of School Board directions with key government directions - Focus of public on "results" of education system - Ongoing assessment of Superintendents (School Board plan and performance report)

Appendix 2 - Alberta Education Budget

Alberta Education Budget

Alberta Education Functional Budget

Alberta Education's approved budget for the 1995-96 fiscal year is \$50.1 M¹. Total spending on education (ECS to 12) in Alberta for 1995-96, including Alberta Education's operating budget, is approximately \$2.8 B. The Department's operating budget represents approximately 1.8% of the total spending on education; the remainder is controlled by the other education partners. The levels of total education system spending and Department spending are controlled by the Treasury Board.

The Department has 4 Divisions and 19 Branches. The table below shows the 1995-96 Department budget by Branch.

Department Budget by Branch

Branch	1995-96 Budget (000s)
<i>Deputy Minister Group Division</i>	
Minister's Office	\$ 314
Deputy Minister's Office	335
Human Resources	761
Communications	328
	<u>\$1,738</u>
<i>Planning, Information and Financial Services Division</i>	
Assistant Deputy Minister's Office	\$ 265
Information Services	8,484
Financial Operations	1,727
Policy & Planning	1,834
Info Access & Legal Corporate Services	353
Education Grants	349
School Finance & Facilities	2,545
	<u>\$15,557</u>
<i>Regional Services Division</i>	
Assistant Deputy Minister's Office	\$ 257
Special Education	3,840
Regional Offices	2,246
Teacher Certification	1,124
National & International Exchange	519
Native Education	455
Appeals Secretariat	411
	<u>\$8,852</u>

¹ The \$50.1M includes \$788,000 of expenditures related to capital assets, comprised primarily of administrative information technology expenditures.

**Department Budget by Branch
(cont'd)**

Branch	1995-96 Budget (000s)
<i>Student Programs & Evaluation Division</i>	
Assistant Deputy Minister's Office	\$ 278
Student Evaluation	9,294
Distance Learning Centre	5,158
Curriculum	4,931
Distance Education	2,399
Language Services	1,888
	<u>\$23,948</u>
Department Total	<u>\$50,095</u>

Alberta Education Goal-Oriented Budget

In addition to developing the 1995-96 budget for each functional branch, Alberta Education undertook a process to categorize its spending based on the nine goals for education in the Business Plan. The objective was to determine the relative spending on each of the nine goals for education ("goal-oriented budget").

Department Process to Develop the Goal-Oriented Budget

Each Branch Director was asked to analyze the key activities of their branch, allocate their approved functional budget to those activities, and align the key activities with the each of the nine goals in the Business Plan. It is our understanding that all Departmental staff were asked to provide their input as to how their day-to-day activities related to the goals in the business plan. In addition to determining the budget directed at each goal, Branch Directors were asked to rank each of their key activities based on their relative contribution towards attaining the particular business plan goal.

Review of Goal-Oriented Budget

Using the Department's goal-oriented budget information as a base, we worked with the Department's Goal Leaders and Goal Coordinators to review the key processes completed by the Department to attain the Business Plan goals. We asked them to identify the

work enabled us to create "Input-Process-Output" models for the each of the Business Plan goals, which are included in Appendix 1.

In developing the "Input-Process-Output" models, it became apparent that some of the Department's initial allocations of budget spending to the Business Plan goals should have been appropriately allocated other goals. We worked with the Department staff to adjust the initial allocations, and to finalize the 1995-96 goal-oriented budget. These adjusted goal-oriented allocations of the 1995-96 budget were reviewed and approved by the Department's Assistant Deputy Ministers.

We believe the Department's "goal-oriented budget" is a positive initiative. It encourages the Department to maintain a strong focus on its goals and strategies for the education system, and enables the evaluation and adjustment of priorities. Alberta Education's implementation of "goal-oriented budgeting" is to be commended and the Department is ahead of other government departments in its use.

We recognize 1995-96 is the first year the Department created a detailed goal-oriented budget, and for the most part their work is meeting the objectives intended. However, based on our review of the goal-oriented budget, we have the following recommendations to maximize the benefits from this process:

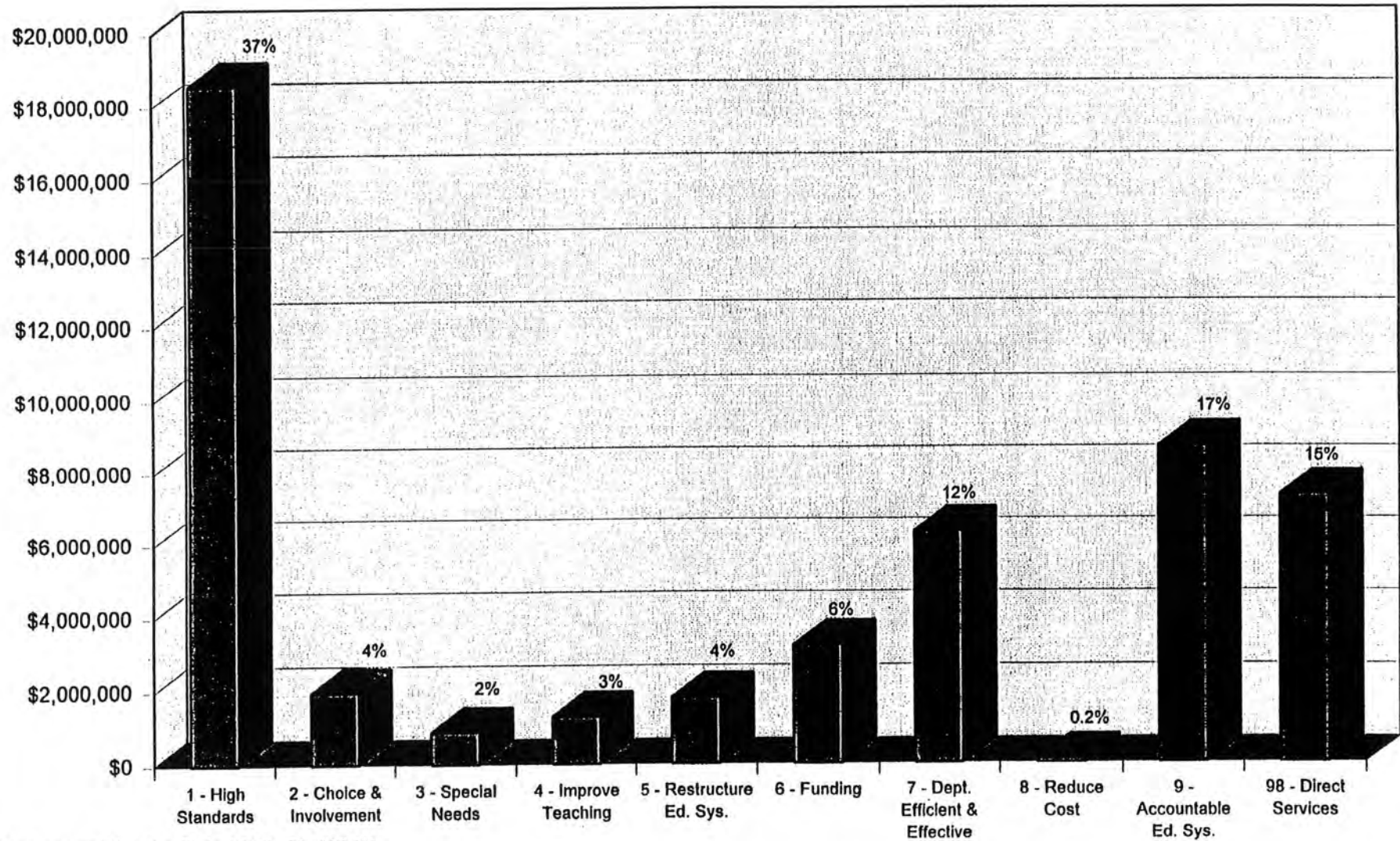
- reduce the number of activities used to align budget spending with goals;
- develop a method to track actual expenditures by goal against budget expenditures by goal;
- increase the profile and understanding of the goal-oriented budget within Alberta Education, and ensure all staff are aware of the rationale used to allocate resources to goals;
- continue with the process of ranking the importance of each branches key activities, but ensure that such rankings are agreed to across functions and levels in the Department; and
- continue to build goal-orientation into the staff performance evaluation system.

1995-96 Goal-Oriented Budget

The graph on the following page shows the Department's 1995-96 budget broken down by Business Plan goal.

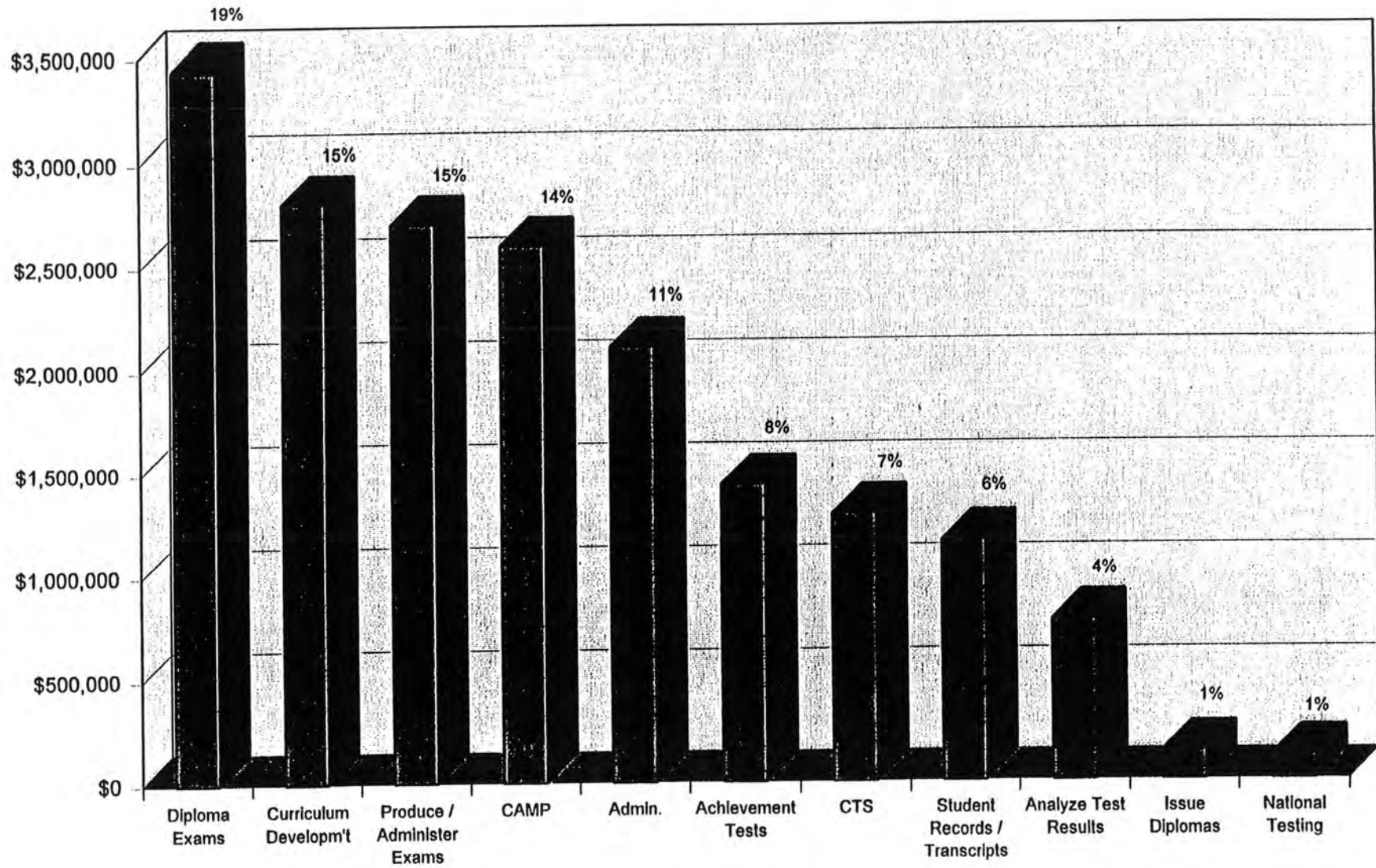
In addition to Goals 1 to 9, another goal has been added, "Goal 98 - Direct Service to Students", to categorize the portion of the Department's budget that is aimed at providing educational services directly to students. These services include the operation of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre and the Alberta School for the Deaf. The Department created Goal 98 to more clearly segregate "education system administration" spending (Goals 1 to 9), from "education delivery spending" (Goal 98). We understand the Department's desire to separately identify "Direct Service to Students". However, a significant portion of the Department's spending does not align with one of the Business Plan goals. We recommend the Department should evaluate whether "Direct Service to Students" is to be included in the Business Plan.

Each of the Business Plan goals, and Goal 98 is comprised of a variety of key activities. The following graphs illustrate the budget directed at completing the key activities supporting each goal.

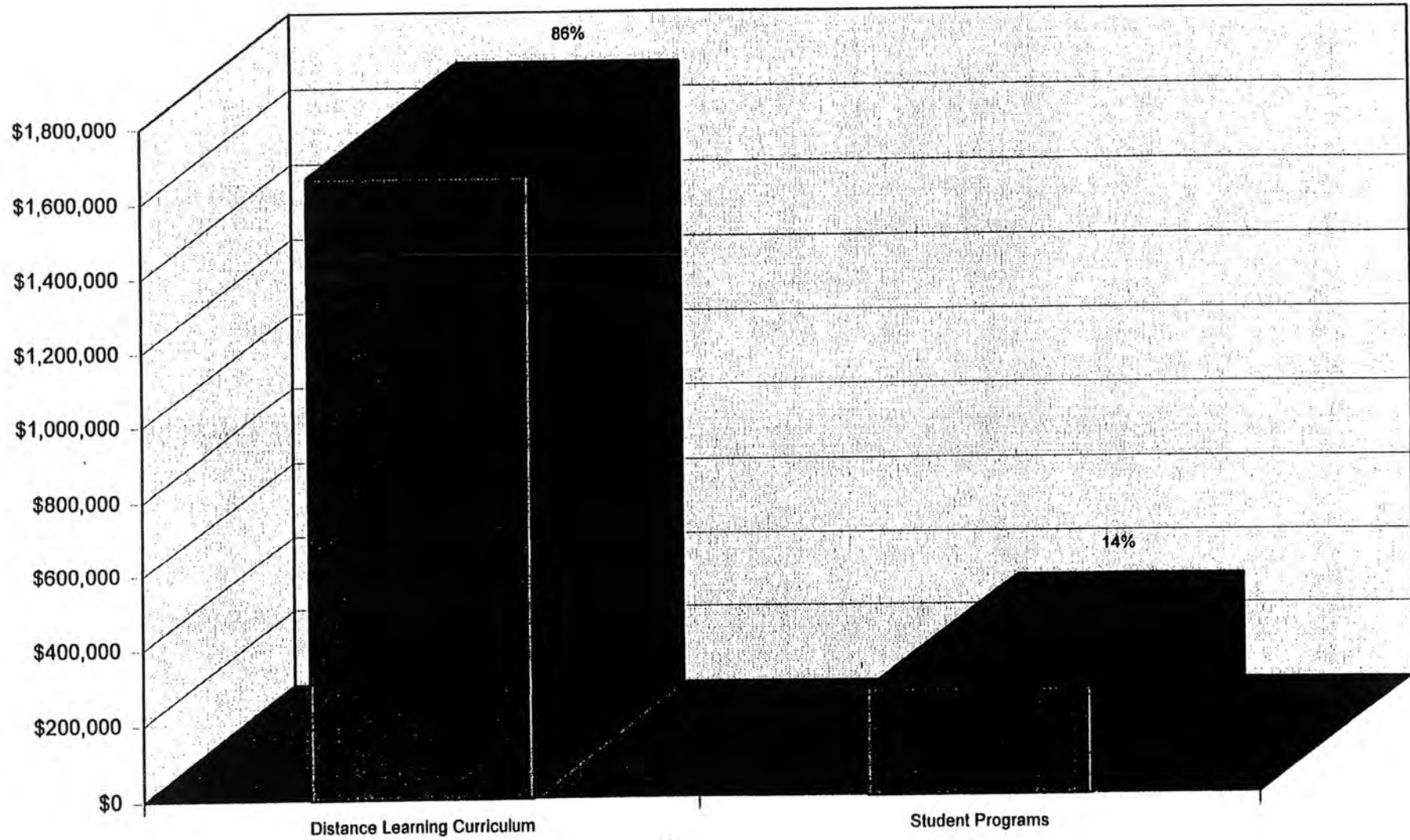
1995 - 96 Goal Resourcing

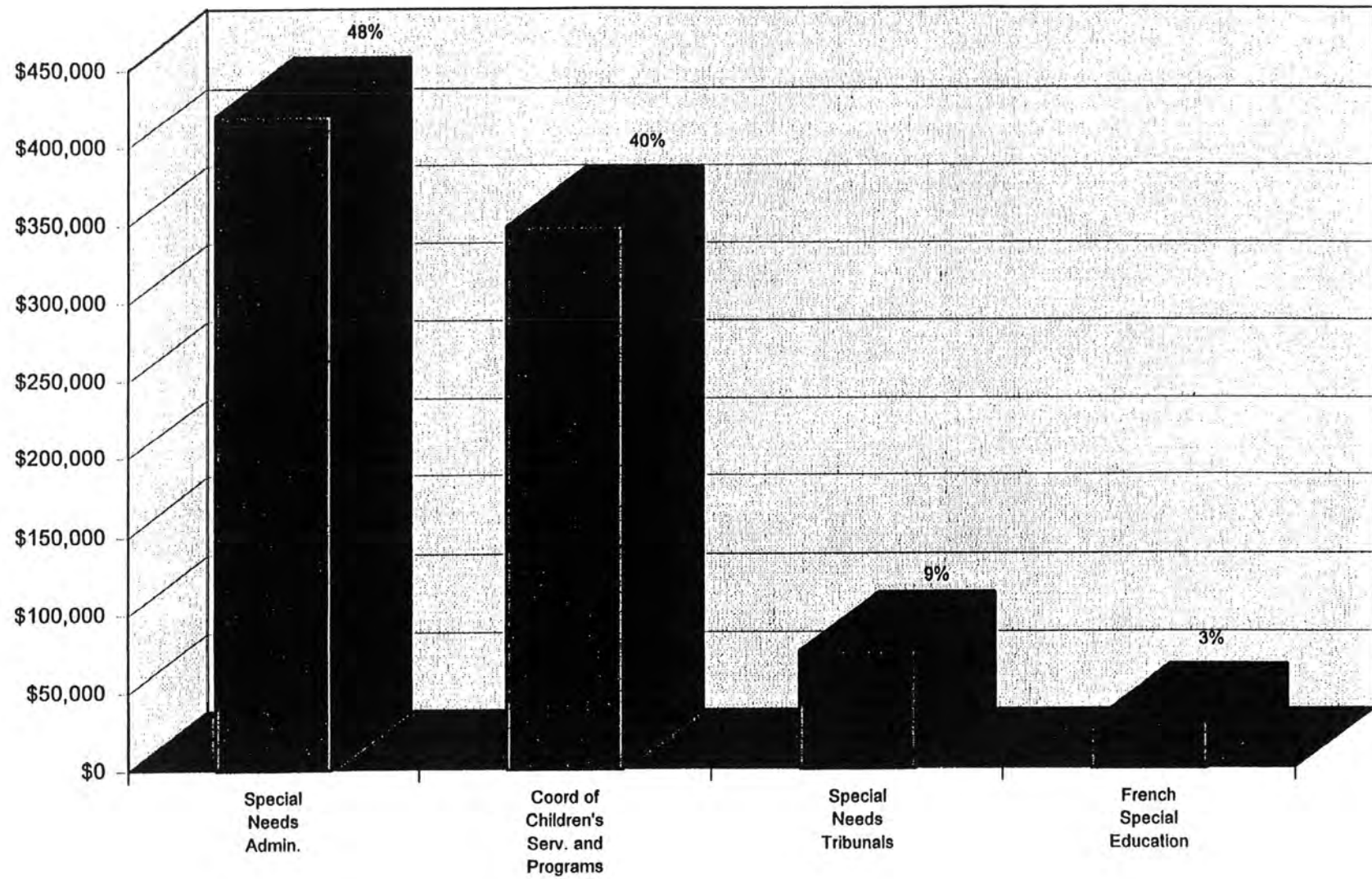
Total Alberta Education Budget 1995 -96: \$50.1M

Goal 1: High Standards for Education

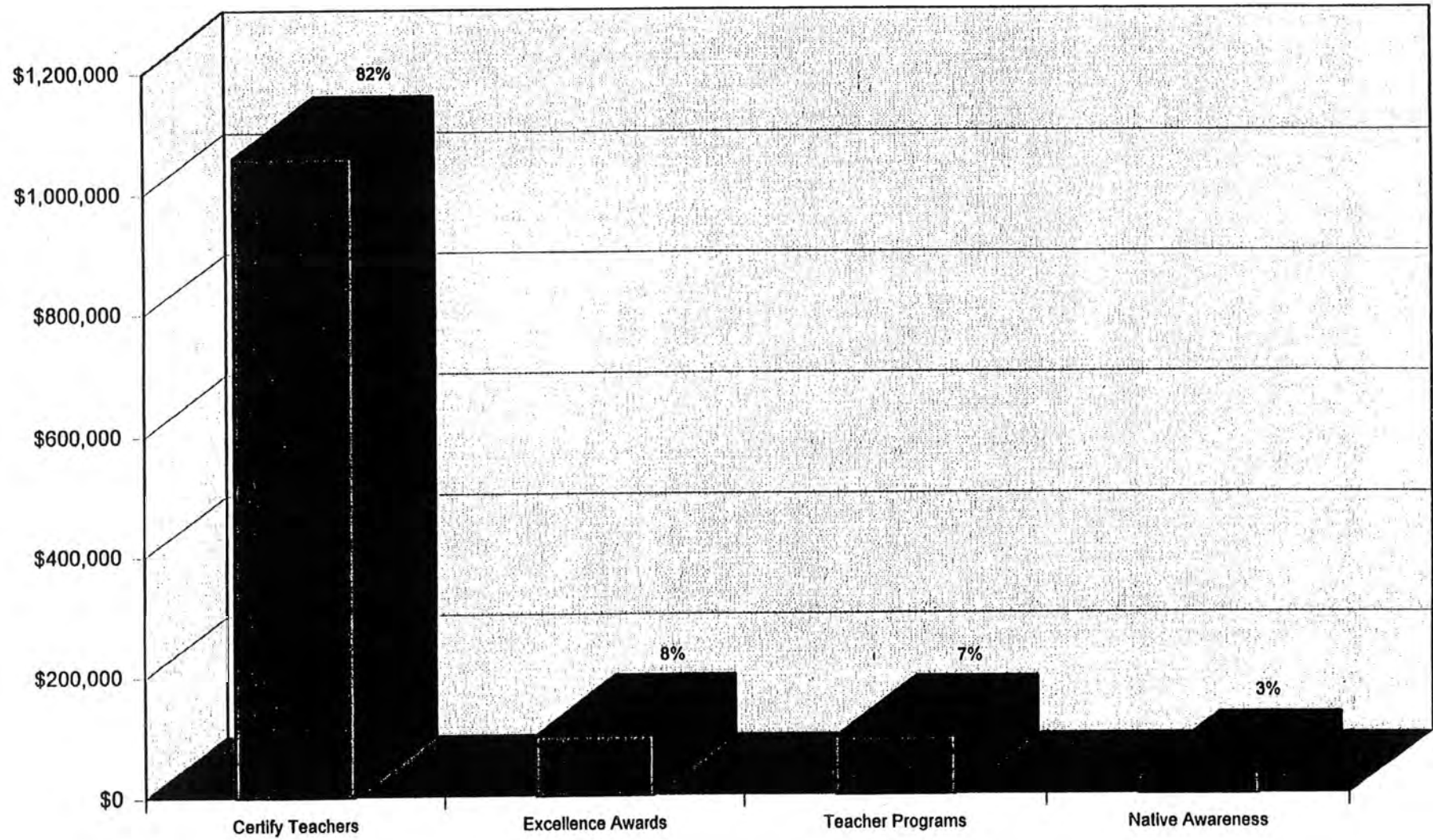


Goal 2: More Choice & Parent Involvement

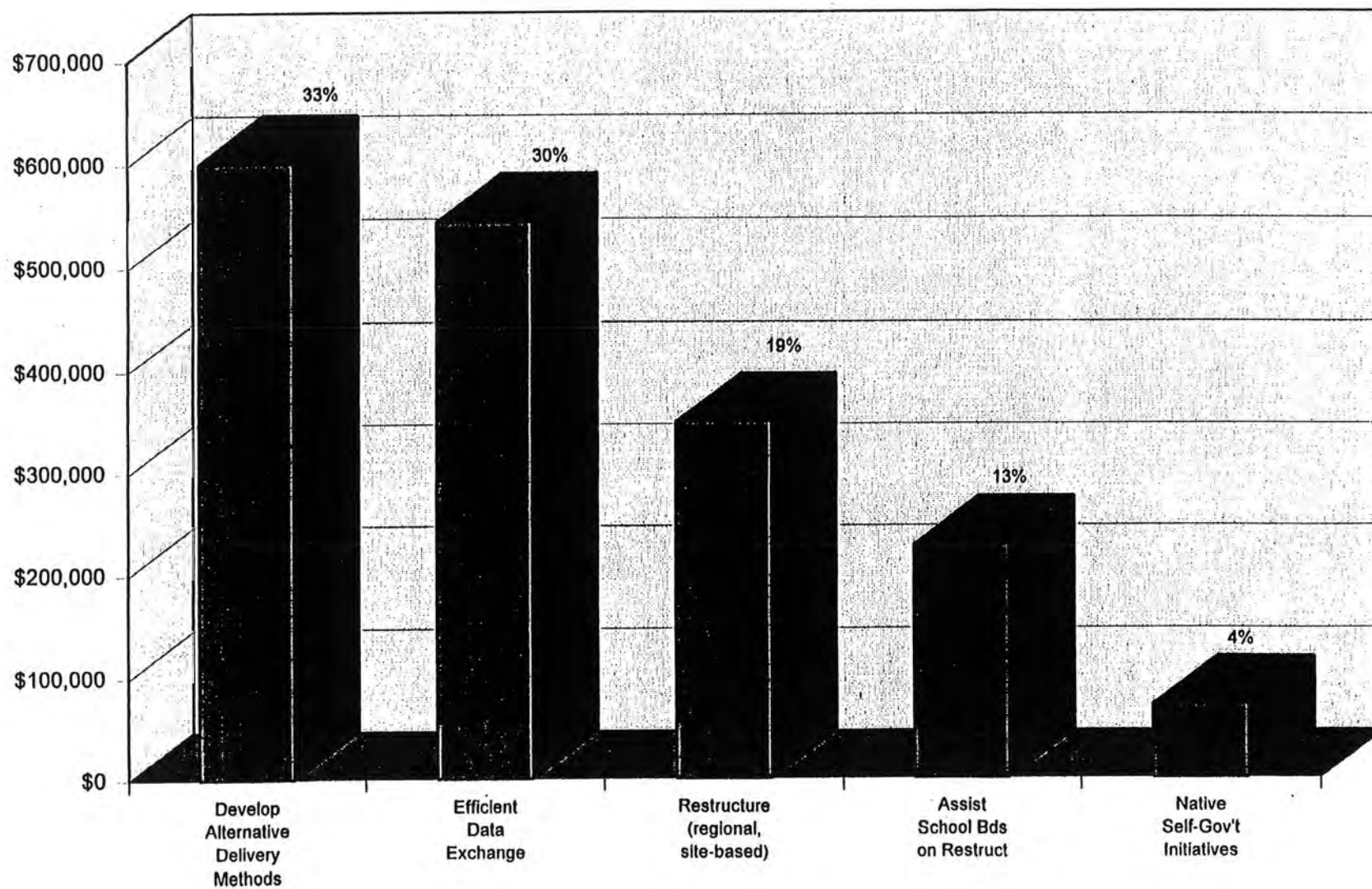


Goal 3: Co-ordination of Services for Special Needs

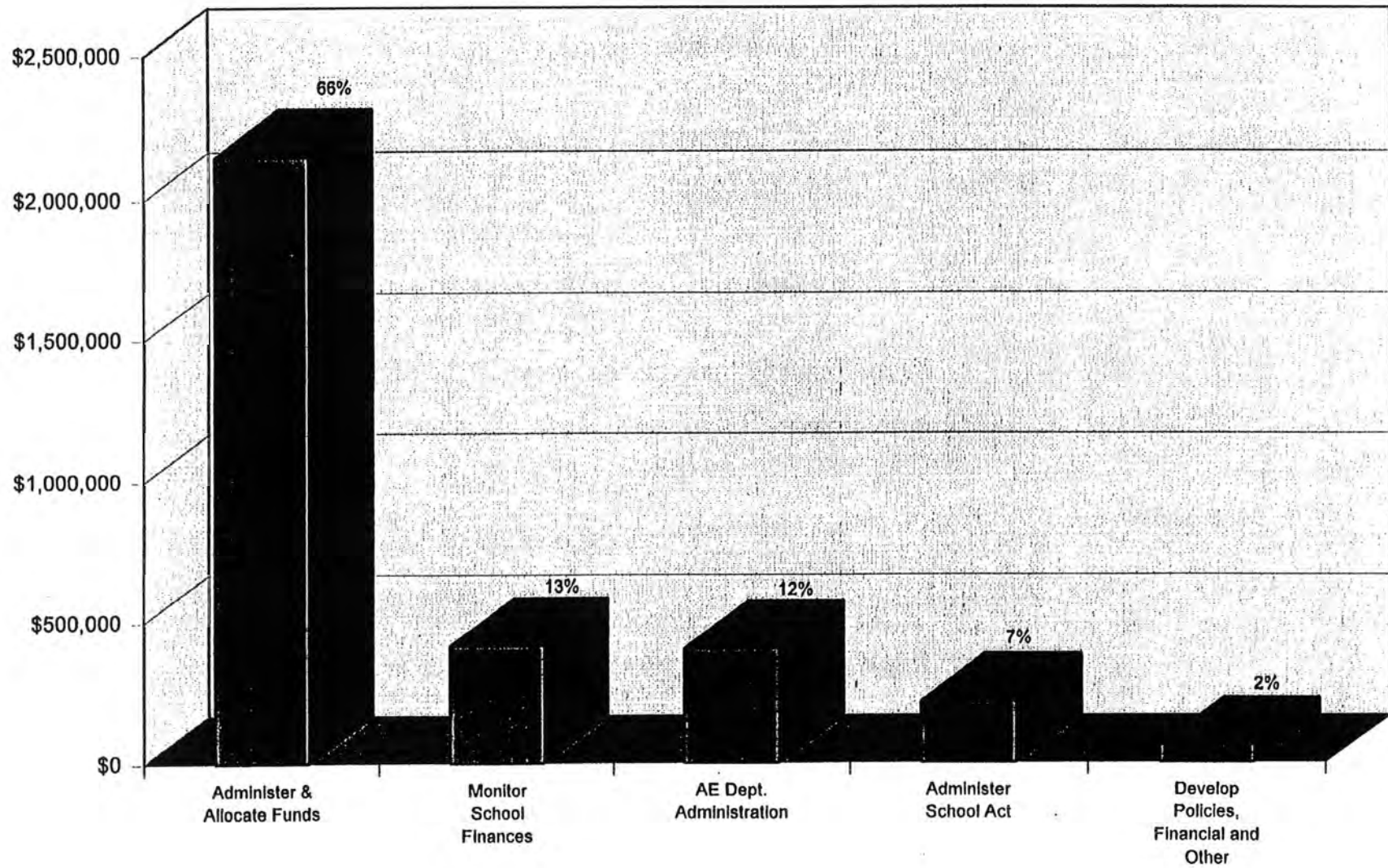
Goal 4: Improve Teaching



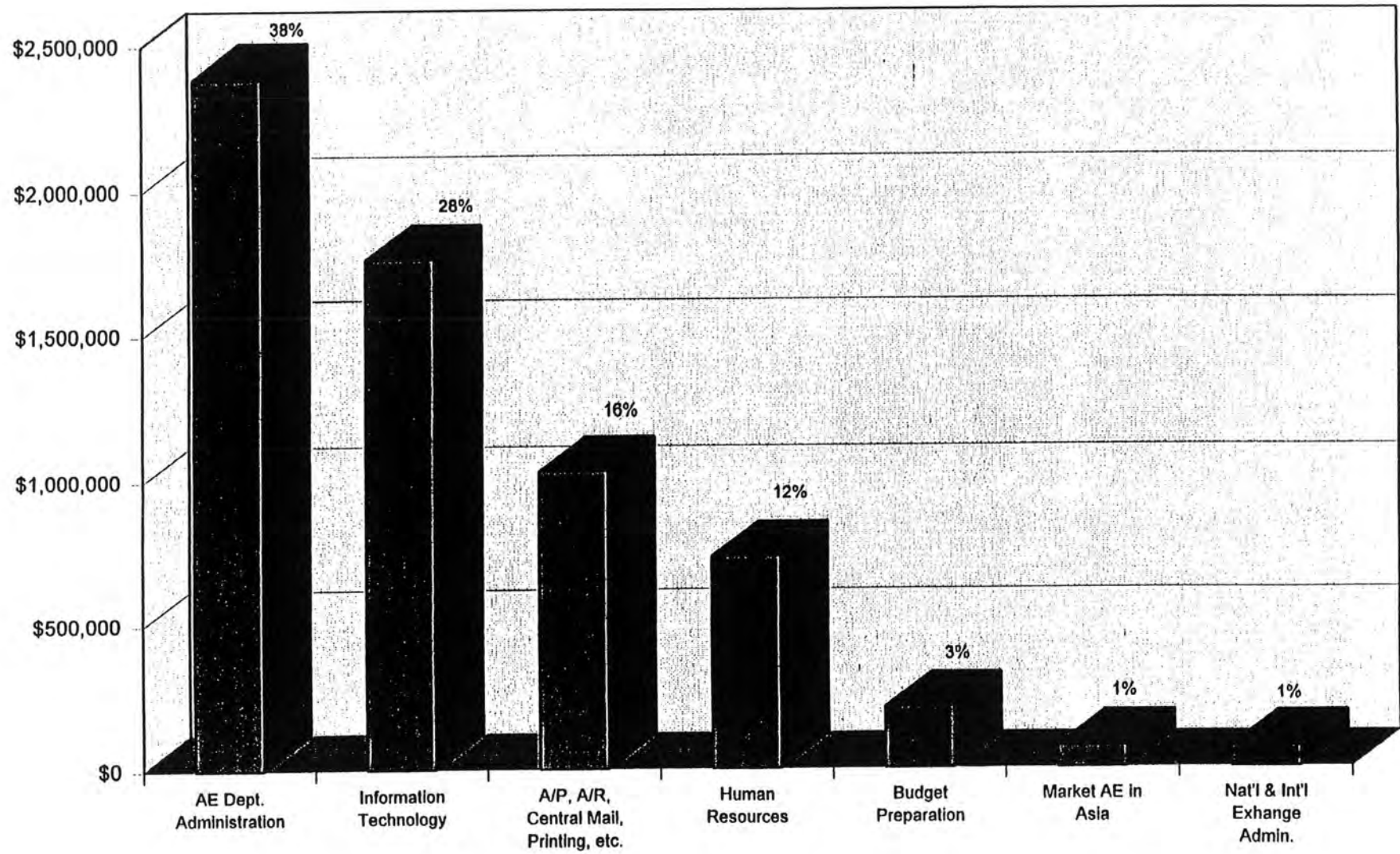
Goal 5: Restructure Education System



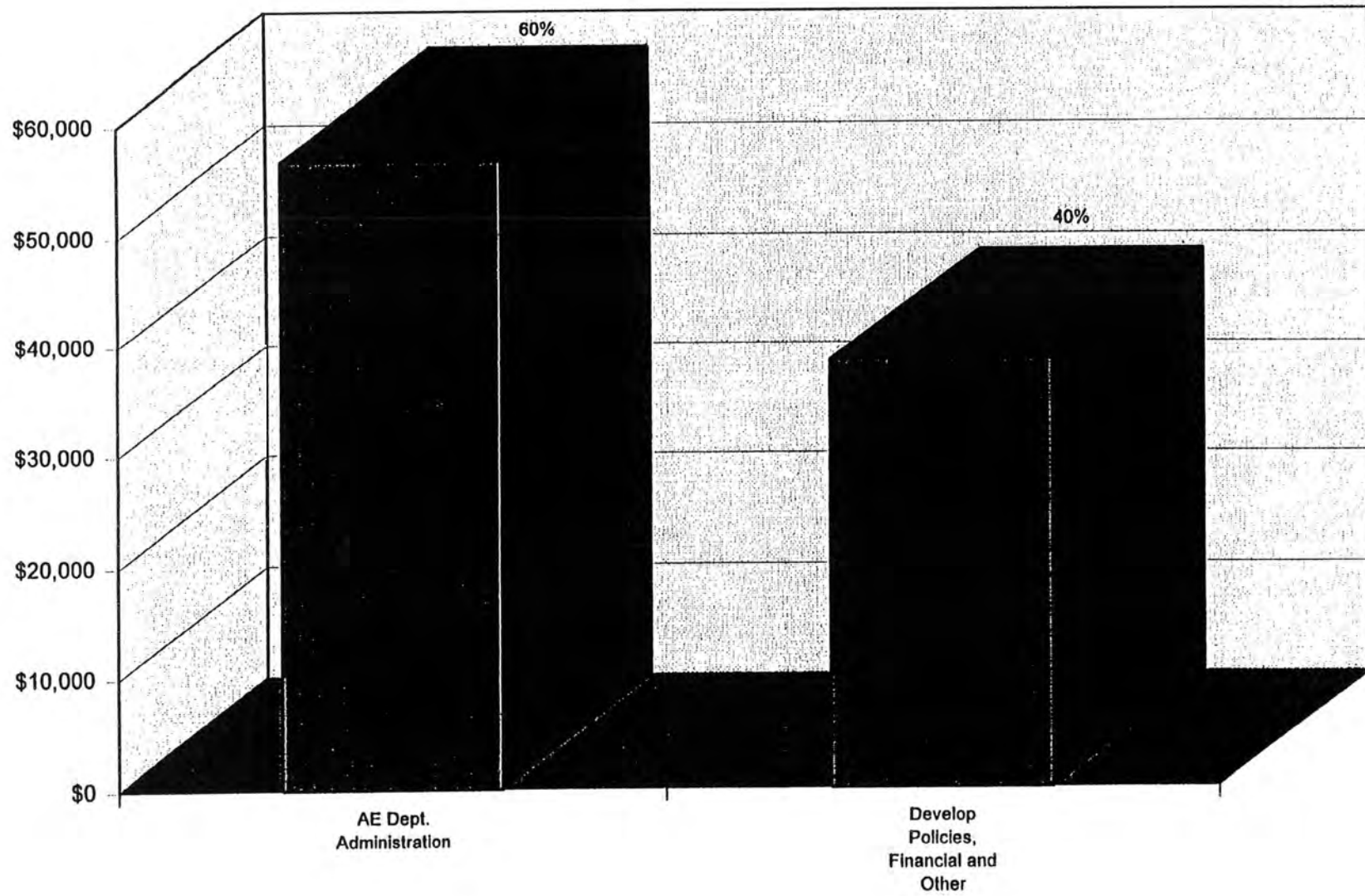
Goal 6: Equitable & Adequate Funding



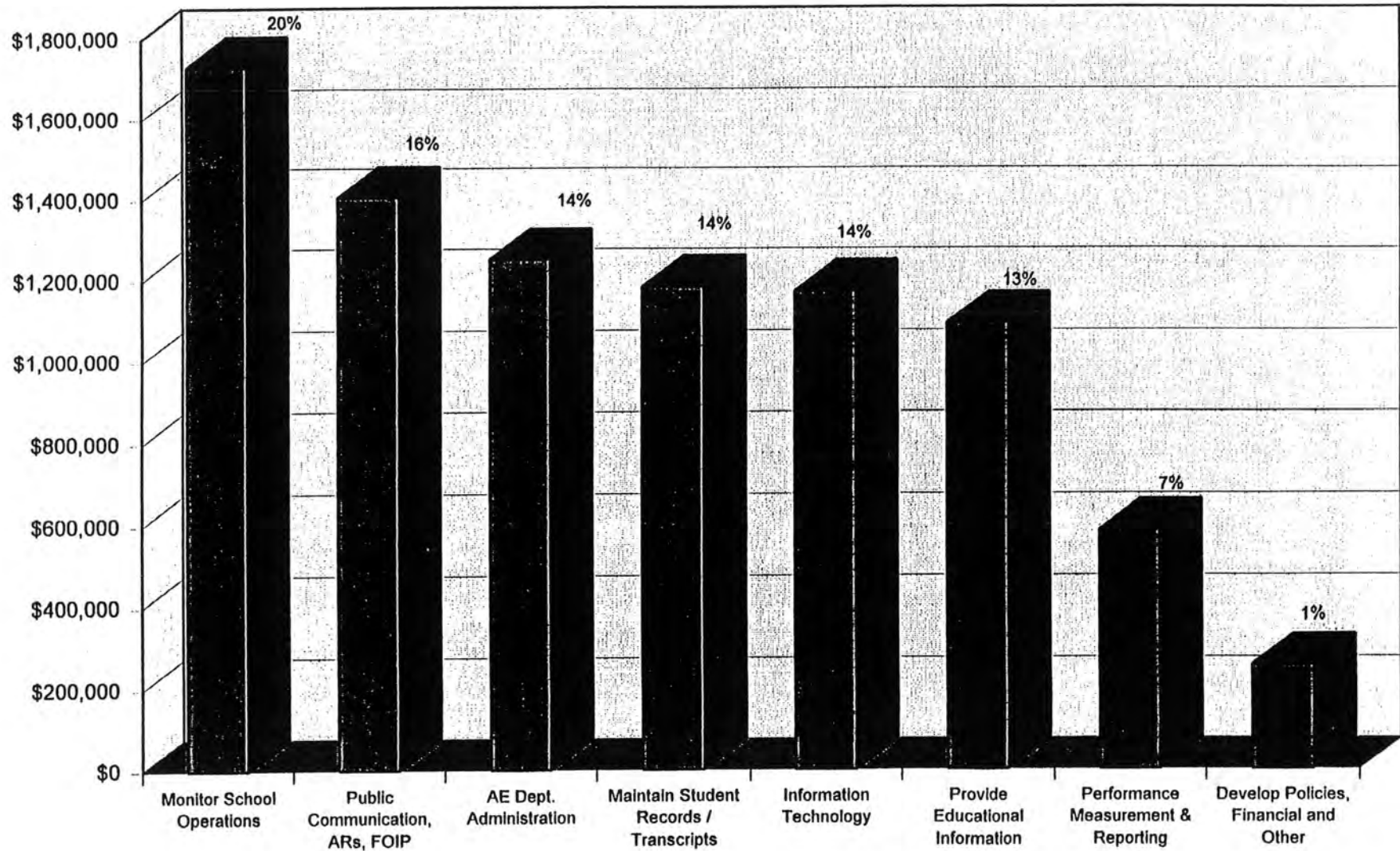
Goal 7: Manage Department Efficiently and Effectively



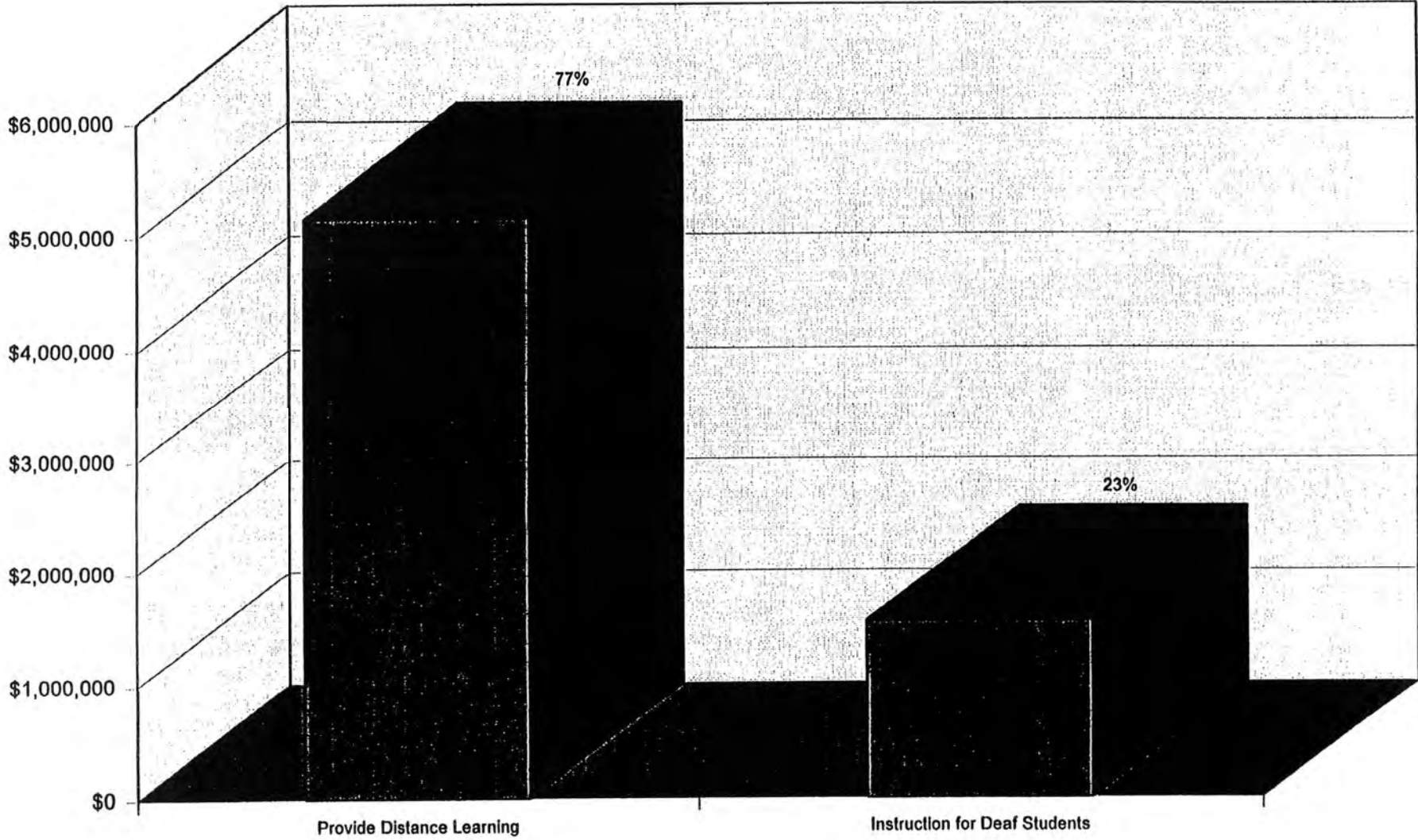
Goal 8: Reduce Cost of Basic Education



Goal 9: Accountable Education System



Goal 98: Direct Services to Students



Goal	SumActivity	Activity	Total
1 - High Stds. for Education	Administration	Admin/DTP/Tech Services	726,995
		Branch Communications	66,650
		Branch Planning & Admin	368,676
		Computer Upgrade	39,000
		Coord. & Direct LSB	353,516
		Dir Office-AR's Commun	164,517
		Dir Office-Coord CSB	146,729
		Leadership & Planning	52,582
		Library Services	189,264
		Administration Total	2,107,929
	Analyze Results	Analytic Services	548,822
		Exp Ach Testing-Analytic	228,488
	Analyze Results Total		777,310
	CAMP	CAMP - Analytic	84,821
		CAMP - Coord/Communication	210,491
		CAMP - CTS	47,276
		CAMP - Doc.Prod./Field Test	170,727
		CAMP - Elementary L.A.	24,358
		CAMP - Elementary Math	3,700
		CAMP - Elementary Sci	10,943
		CAMP - Elementary Soc Studies	48,700
		CAMP - ESL 10-12	106,964
		CAMP - Francaise	228,038
		CAMP - FSL	112,147
		CAMP - Math	145,533
		CAMP - Science	100,056
		CAMP - Secondary L.A.	124,657
		CAMP - Secondary Math	126,844
		CAMP - Secondary Sci	223,222
		CAMP - Secondary Soc Studies	95,156
		CAMP - Soc Studies	120,674
		CAMP: CTS 7-12	612,822
	CAMP Total		2,597,129
	CTS	CTS Curric Stds & Implment	624,839
		CTS DL Agric Dev	44,610
		CTS DL Enterprise Dev	20,603
		CTS DL Financial Dev	145,468
		CTS DL Info Process Dev	178,993
		CTS DL Legal Dev	40,610
		CTS DL Tourism Dev	112,449
		Dev of CTS Modules	127,066
	CTS Total		1,294,638
	Curriculum Development	Distance Learning	69,666
		ECS/Kindergarten	49,567
		Educ. Carree, Personnel	135,886
		Elementary Lang Arts	17,747
		Elementary Math	23,908
		Elementary Science	136,743
		Elementary Soc Studies	18,078
		ESL/Fine Arts K-12	36,489
		Fr Lang Arts: Prog Development	48,824
		Francaise: Prog Development	36,405
		Health/Phys Ed K-12	29,187
		International/Nat Lang	212,365
		Math Prog of Studies & Res	55,212
		Native Language Development	185,322
		NOVA	130,000
		Prog. Direction & Policy Devmt	81,847
		Program Policy Development	402,144
		Resource Needs	448,313
		Science Elem Prog of Studies	63,527
		Secondary Lang Arts	61,977
		Secondary Math	143,839
		Secondary Science	50,260

		Secondary Soc Studies	38,741
		Western Protocol - LSB	72,708
		WP: International Lang	40,022
		WP: Lang Arts K-12	28,570
		WP: Math K-12	162,059
		WP: Science K-12	27,005
	Curriculum Development Total		2,806,411
	Develop/ Mark Ach. Tests	Ach Assessment Program	1,439,319
	Develop/ Mark Ach. Tests Total		1,439,319
	Develop/ Mark Diploma Exams	Add Marking Math/Sci	64,600
		Humanities Diploma Exam Prog	1,611,795
		Math 33 Diploma Exam	150,220
		Math/Science Dip Exam	1,341,199
		Soc Studies 33 Dip Exam	269,801
	Develop/ Mark Diploma Exams Total		3,437,615
	Issue Diplomas	Diploma Services	134,941
	Issue Diplomas Total		134,941
	Maintain Student Records	SIS Course Info Project	203,000
		Student System Operations (SRS)	509,000
	Maintain Student Records Total		712,000
	National Testing	SAIP	54,135
		TIMMS	58,735
	National Testing Total		112,870
	Produce/Administer Exams/Tests	Amort - New Diploma Exams	13,000
		Annual Printing-Ach Tests	460,000
		Document Production -	982,346
		Exam Processing	766,030
		Field Testing	113,690
		Integ Mgt Systems (New Diploma Exams)	37,000
		Replenish Ach Tests	79,000
		Special Cases	252,507
	Produce/Administer Exams/Tests Total		2,703,573
	Transcript Services	Transcript Services	453,000
	Transcript Services Total		453,000
	1 - High Stds. for Education Total		18,576,735

2 - More Choice & Parent Involvement	Develop D.L. Curriculum	Bio/Phys/Chem 20/30 DL	92,000	
		CAMP Math Development	24,140	
		Copyright/Library	163,819	
		English DL Completion	86,235	
		Health DL completion Dev	19,439	
		Inst Design/Dev Unit	270,816	
		MATH 10 DL Development	142,910	
		MATH 20 DL Development	79,981	
		MATH 31 DL Development	115,200	
		MATH 7 DL Development	74,790	
		MATH 8 DL Development	43,155	
		MATH 9 DL Development	32,404	
		Social Studies DL Comp	75,858	
		WP Inter Prov Math CAI	343,564	
		WP Multimedia chemistry	102,736	
	Develop D.L. Curriculum Total		1,667,047	
	Student Programs		279,789	
	Student Programs Total		279,789	
2 - More Choice & Parent Involvement Total			1,946,836	
3 - Coordination of Serv. for Special Needs	Coord of Children's Serv and Programs		Children's Ser & Program	348,727
	Coord of Children's Serv and Programs Total			348,727
	French Special Education		French Special Education	28,756
	French Special Education Total			28,756
	Special Needs Admin.		Planning, Quality Control	420,470
	Special Needs Admin. Total			420,470
	Special Needs Tribunals		Special Needs Tribunals	75,436
	Special Needs Tribunals Total			75,436
3 - Coordination of Serv. for Special Needs Total			873,389	
4 - Improve Teaching	Certify Teachers	Amort - Teacher System		35,000
		Teacher Qual & Dev		1,024,600
	Certify Teachers Total			1,059,600
	Excellence Awards		Excellence Awards	99,000
	Excellence Awards Total			99,000
	Native Awareness		Native Awareness	32,945
	Native Awareness Total			32,945
	Teacher Programs		Teacher Programs	94,829
Teacher Programs Total			94,829	
4 - Improve Teaching Total			1,286,374	
5 - Restructure Education System	Ass. Sch Bds on Restruct		Business Management	228,328
	Ass. Sch Bds on Restruct Total			228,328
	Develop Alternative Delivery Methods	ACCESS/Lrng Resources		411,851
		Distance Learning Imp Unit		129,421
		Instr Tech/Media Unit		59,499
	Develop Alternative Delivery Methods Total			600,771
	Efficient Data Exchange	Amort Edulink		40,000
		Client Services		244,000
		Edulink Project		260,000
	Efficient Data Exchange Total			544,000
	Native Self-Gov't Initiatives		Self-Gov't Initiatives	72,147
	Native Self-Gov't Initiatives Total			72,147
	Restructure (regional, site-based)		Restructuring	349,671
	Restructure (regional, site-based) Total			349,671
5 - Restructure Education System Total			1,794,917	

6 - Equitable & Adequate Funding	Administer & Allocate Funds	Accountability	228,106
		Admin Cap. Prj/Budget Grants	294,592
		Amort - Grants Fin & Stat Sys	180,000
		Amort CETS	95,000
		CETS	25,000
		Ensure Education Syts.Contr.	174,855
		Funding All Sch Authorities	153,763
		Gr Enroll Proc Redesign	167,000
		Mng/Acct For Funding Frwork	491,936
		School Capital Programs	338,110
	Administer & Allocate Funds Total		2,148,362
	Administer School Act	Support Services	218,477
	Administer School Act Total		218,477
	AE Dept. Aministration	Equitable Funding	405,757
	AE Dept. Aministration Total		405,757
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other	Financial Policy	38,146
		Fiscal Policy	24,075
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other Total		62,221
	Monitor School Finances	Direct School Facilities	41,202
		Direct School Finance	52,572
		Drct Del/Mon/Audit Sch Bus.	38,854
		Financial Management	283,801
	Monitor School Finances Total		416,429
6 - Equitable & Adequate Funding Total		3,251,246	

7 - Dept. Efficiently & Effectively	A/P, A/R, Central Mail, Printing, etc.	Central Mail	238,074
		Contract Administration	44,622
		Dept Accounts Payable	334,380
		Dept Revenue & Accts. Rec.	193,961
		Dept. Inventory	47,953
		Print Center	136,810
		Purchasing, Vehicle & Rental	36,125
	A/P, A/R, Central Mail, Printing, etc. Total		1,031,925
	AE Dept. Aministration	A.I.T.	16,287
		ADM's Office	277,800
		Branch Administration	312,820
		Branch Management	97,000
		Branch Planning & Mgt	102,830
		Branch Resource & Admin	506,000
		Department Leadership	335,500
		Dept/Unit Planning & Mgt	67,730
		Divisional Leadership	185,098
		Fac. Planning & Coord.	79,865
		Manage Efficiently	94,328
		Ministry Leadership	313,848
	AE Dept. Aministration Total		2,389,106
	Budget Preparation	Dept Budget Analysis	50,838
		Dept Budget Planning & Coord.	27,132
		Dept Budget System & Prep.	32,759
		Dept. Budget Plan & Mgt	56,981
		Planning & Budgeting-	41,905
	Budget Preparation Total		209,615
	Human Resources	Director's Office	392,073
		Pay & Benefits	104,847
		Planning & Operations	236,449
	Human Resources Total		733,369
	Information Technology	Amort - C/S	20,000
		Amort - Cap Equipment	100,000
		Client Server Capital Assets	100,000
		Cust Serv CS/PFS/RS/HR/Com	440,000
		Cust Serv MO/DMO/SPED/IS	506,000
		Dept Network Enhancement	250,000
		Dept Telecom	10,000
		Dev Unspecified	99,000
		Financial Systems - External	17,106
		Financial Systems - Internal	55,068
		Network Maintenance	43,397
		Systems Dev. & Mtc.	55,328
		Unit Planning & Mgt	45,553
		User Support & Planning	22,597
	Information Technology Total		1,764,049
	Market AE in Asia	Marketing and Visitors	73,245
	Market AE in Asia Total		73,245
	Nat'l & Int'l Exchange Admin.	Support Services	71,237
	Nat'l & Int'l Exchange Admin. Total		71,237
7 - Dept. Efficiently & Effectively Total			6,272,546
8 - Reduce Cost of Basic Education	AE Dept. Aministration	Reduce/Manage Educ. Costs	56,757
	AE Dept. Aministration Total		56,757
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other	Teacher's Pension Policy	38,554
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other Total		38,554
8 - Reduce Cost of Basic Education Total			95,311

9 - Accountable Education System	AE Dept. Administration	Corporate Records	366,989
		EIE Management	144,000
		Ensuring open/account. Educ	56,757
		IRWG	27,929
		Leadership & Planning	199,814
		Legislative Support	90,815
		Library Services	189,264
		Manage Action Requests	71,902
		Support Senior Mangement	103,072
	AE Dept. Administration Total		1,250,542
	Collect/Analyze Financial Info. from Schools	School Business Plan	105,171
	Collect/Analyze Financial Info. from Schools Total		105,171
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other	Fin. Policy Acct. & Int	28,330
		Policy and Regulations Manual	73,623
		Provincial Business Plan	154,267
	Develop Policies, Financial and Other Total		256,220
	Information Technology	Infor Tech Ping - Data Admin	232,000
		ITS Man/Shared Services	246,000
		Technical Services	693,800
	Information Technology Total		1,171,800
	Maintain Student Records	Amort - SIS Reg Component	154,000
		SIS Implementation Project	376,059
		Student Sys Operations - SIS	653,000
	Maintain Student Records Total		1,183,059
	Monitor School Operations	Attendance Board	163,919
		Funding	324,550
		Ministerial Reviews	171,844
		Monitor Native Educ. Funds	112,404
		Monitoring Activities	395,657
		Reviews & Audits	402,626
		Scanning & Monitoring	54,839
	Monitor School Operations Total		1,625,839
	Performance Measurement & Reporting	Accountability Framework	238,571
		Pan Canadian Indicators	31,590
		Provincial Performance Report	315,540
	Performance Measurement & Reporting Total		585,701
	Provide Educational Information	Amort- EIS Perf Measures	30,000
		Education Information Services	627,000
		EIS Perf Measures	150,000
		Integ Mgt Sys (Exc. New Dip Exams)	237,000
		Long Ach Database proj	50,000
	Provide Educational Information Total		1,094,000
	Public Communication, ARs, FOIP	Action Requests	37,661
		AR's & Inquiries	495,293
		FOIP Program	141,831
		Newsletter Production	49,051
		Public Interaction	402,842
		Public Relations	278,473
	Public Communication, ARs, FOIP Total		1,405,151
9 - Accountable Education System Total		8,677,483	

98 - Direct Services to Students	Instruction for Deaf Students	Academic Admin	231,441
		Elementary Education	458,913
		Interpreting	196,574
		Secondary Education	677,932
		Support Services	597,294
	Instruction for Deaf Students Total		2,162,154
	Provide Distance Learning	Accounts/Verification	270,149
		Computer Services	414,076
		Finance & Personnel	191,560
		Instr/Serv Career & Tech	623,753
		Instr/Serv Humanities	587,738
		Instr/Serv Jr High/Elem	661,477
		Instr/Serv Math/Science	900,861
		Lesson Records/Registration	643,064
		Records/Steno	246,458
		Senior Administration	131,978
		Student Services	486,687
	Provide Distance Learning Total		5,157,801
98 - Direct Services to Students Total		7,319,955	
(blank)	(blank)	Total	50,094,792

Appendix 3 - Typology of Mechanisms

ALBERTA EDUCATION - Mechanisms, Controls, Regulations, Policies, etc.

CURRICULUM	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Regulation	
French Language Immersion Regulation	Regulation
Ministerial Order & Directive	
Human Sexuality Education	Ministerial Order & Directive
Policy	
Locally Developed Junior and Senior High Course Policy	Policy
English as a Second Language Policy	Policy
Controversial Issues in Education Policy	Policy
Regulatory	
Programs of Study: Elementary School Junior High School Senior High School (includes CTS, common western curriculum frameworks; pan-Canadian curriculum; identification of basic resources for programs)	regulatory
Kindergarten Program Statement (1985)	regulatory
Guides to Education: - ECS to Grade 9 Handbook - Senior High School Handbook	regulatory
guide/regulatory	
Integrated Occupational Program Information Manual for Administrators, Counsellors, and Teachers (Revised Edition) (1994)	guide/regulatory
Off-Campus Education Guide for Administrators, Counsellors & Teachers (1995)	guide/regulatory
ESL Documents	guide/regulatory
guide	
ECS Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions (1984)	guide
Work Experience Education Manual (1983)	guide
Work Experience Program: Teacher Resource Manual, Junior and Senior High (1990)	guide
Alberta High School Graduation Requirements Booklet (1993)	guide
Career & Technology Studies: Manual for Administrators, Counsellors and Teachers	guide
Essential Concepts, Skills and Attitudes for Grade 12 (1987)	guide
Focus on Research	guide
Industrial Education Manual for Guidance to Teachers, Counsellors and Administrators (1983)	guide
Promoting Tolerance, Understanding and Respect for Diversity: A Monograph for Educators (1985)	guide
Students' Interactions Developmental Framework: The Social Sphere (1988)	guide
Students' Physical Growth Developmental Framework: Physical Dimension (1988)	guide
Students Thinking Developmental Framework: The Cognitive Domain	guide
The Emerging Student: Relationships Among the Cognitive, Social and Physical Domains of Development (1991)	guide
Classroom Assessment Materials (Co-develop with Student Evaluation)	guide
Guides to Standards and Implementation for new programs (e.g. CTS)	guide
Listings of Authorized resources	guide
Connection - newsletter with updates on program dev't and new resource listings	guide
A Credit to Yourself: Planning Your High School Program (1993)	guide
Teaching Thinking: Enhancing Learning (1990)	guide

CURRICULUM (Cont'd)	
guide	
Who Decides What Students Should Learn in School...And How? (1989)	guide
Framework for a Locally Developed Language Arts Curriculum (ECS - Grade 12) (1991)	guide
Various curriculum guides and teacher resource manuals (prepared prior to 1993)	guide

STUDENT EVALUATION / TESTING	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Regulation	
Student Evaluation Regulation	Regulation
Student Record Regulation	Regulation
Policy	
Use & Reporting of Results on Provincial Assessments Policy	Policy
Course Challenge Policy	Policy
Student Evaluation Policy	Policy
Management and Finance Plan	Policy
regulatory	
School Board Plan for Improvement	regulatory
General Info Bulletins for Diploma Examinations Program & Achievement Testing Program	regulatory
Directives for Administration, Supervising Teacher's Manual, Diploma Examinations Program	regulatory
Directives for Administration, Diploma Examinations Program	regulatory
Teacher's Manual, Provincial Achievement Tests	regulatory
guide	
Appendix A - Diploma Examination Development Process	guide
Information Bulletins	guide
School Achievement Indicators Program (math)	guide
Classroom Assessment Materials	guide
Developing Achievement Tests	guide
Classroom Assessment Materials Project (CAMP) -- An Update	guide
Developing Achievement Tests	guide
TIMSS CANADA: The Third International Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS)	guide
The School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP): Information for Parents and Students, from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (information on the 1994 reading and writing assessment across Canada)	guide
Diagnostic Reading Program (1986); Diagnostic Mathematics Program (1990); Evaluation Students' Learning and Communication Processes (1992)	guide
Oral Communication Evaluation: English 30/33 Activities and Scoring Guides (1990)	guide
Information Bulletins on Diploma Exams & Achievement Tests in Each Subject	guide
Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing	guide
Guidelines for Interpreting the Results from Diploma Examinations; Guidelines for Interpreting the Results from Provincial Achievement Tests (distributed with school and jurisdiction reports)	guide
Information for Students	guide
Patterns and Processes: Approaches to Writing by Grade 12 Students (comparison of written work from diploma exams in English and Social Studies administered in 1984 and 1990)	guide
Conventions of Language Study (Analysis of students' errors in writing on diploma exams in English 30 - January and June 1993)	guide
Samples of Students' writing from diploma exams and samples from provincial achievement tests	guide
News releases following each administration of diploma exams and achievement tests - titled "How are students doing?"	guide
Mathematics at Work in Alberta (sample mathematics questions related to real-world problems)	guide

STUDENT EVALUATION / TESTING (CONT'D)	
report	
Annual Report (diploma, examinations results for the entire school year, based on combined results from January, June and August exams; includes appendix on exam development)	report
Individual Student Profile (for each child who writes the provincial achievement tests)	report
Detailed School & Jurisdiction Reports for Principals and Superintendents on their students' results on diploma exams and Provincial Achievement Tests; includes participation data	report
Five-year Summary Reports on Results of Diploma Examinations, including data on participation rates, provided to Principals and Superintendents annually; similar Five-year reports on Results from Provincial Achievement Tests	report
Examiners' Report summarizing results from each diploma exam; Assessment Highlights summarizing results from each achievement test	report
Analysis of Achievement Test and Diploma Exam Results by School Board & School (Jurisdiction Reports)	report
tests	
Diploma examinations in eleven subjects	tests
National and International Tests	tests
Provincial Achievement Tests, grades 3, 6,9	tests

TEACHER CERTIFICATION, EVALUATION, DEVELOPMENT	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Teaching Profession Act	Legislation
Regulation	
Certification of Teachers Regulation	Regulation
Practice Review of Teachers - Regulation	Regulation
Superintendent of Schools Regulation	Regulation
Ministerial Order naming Member of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards	Regulation
Ministerial Order Naming Members of the Board of Reference	Regulation
Ministerial Order naming members of the Certification Appeal Committee (CAC)	Regulation
Policy	
Teacher Evaluation Policy	Policy
Teacher Exchange Policy	Policy
guide	
Information and Guidelines for Persons Considering Making a Complaint under the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation	guide
Application for Alberta Teacher Certification Package	guide
Certificated Personnel Record Form	guide
Teacher Evaluation Policy Implementation	guide
Teacher Evaluation Practices in Alberta (1984)	guide
Toward Teacher Growth: A Study of the Impact of Alberta's Teacher Evaluation Policy (1993)	guide
Protocol Alberta Education and Ministry of Public Instruction Russian Republic	guide
Teacher Exchange Handbooks	guide
Quality Teaching: Quality Education for Alberta Students	guide
awards	
Excellence Awards	awards

SPECIAL EDUCATION / SPECIAL NEEDS	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Regulation	
Alberta School for the Deaf Regulation	Regulation
Policy	
Native Education Policy	Policy
Special Education Policy	Policy
Students in Institutions Policy	Policy
Special Needs Tribunal Policy	Policy
Materials Resource Centre Policy	Policy
Educational Placement of Students with Exceptional Needs Policy	Policy
Resident Students of the Government Policy	Policy
Students in Institutions Policy	Policy
regulatory	
Native Education in Alberta's Schools (1987)	regulatory
guide/regulatory	
Special Education Manual	guide/regulatory
guide	
Career Development Services for Alberta Students, 1994	guide
Individualized Programs Plans 1989	guide
Resources for Special Education and Guidance and Counselling	guide
Creating a Positive Place Called School: Elementary School Counselling 1994	guide
ECS Program Unit Grants	guide
ECS Program Unit Funding: A Handbook for ECS Operators 1995	
From Position to Program: Building A Comprehensive School Guidance...	guide
Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs	guide
Moving to the Future: Outcome Based Comprehensive...	guide
Programming for Students with Special Needs Series	guide
Working Together - Dispute Resolution (5 brochures)	guide
Native Education in Alberta: Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education (1987)	guide

CHOICE / INVOLVEMENT	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Regulation	
School Councils Regulation	Regulation
Charter School Regulation	Regulation
Home Education Regulation	Regulation
Private Schools Regulation	Regulation
Student Transportation Regulation	Regulation
Languages other than French and English	Regulation
Policy	
Charter School Policy	Policy
Home Education Policy	Policy
Public and Separate School Policy	Policy
Early Childhood Services Policy	Policy
Locally Developed Junior and Senior High Course Policy	Policy
Locally Developed Religious Studies Courses Policy	Policy
International Student Services Policy	Policy
International School Partnership Policy	Policy
Vocational Education Policy	Policy
Off-campus Education Policy	Policy
Languages other the French or English Policy	Policy
School-Based Decision Making Policy	Policy
School Council Policy	Policy
Student Exchange Policy	Policy
Integrated Occupational Program Policy	Policy
French as a Second Language and French Language Immersion Policy	Policy
Languages Other than French or English	Policy
Private School Policy	Policy
guide	
School Councils Handbook - Meaningful Involvement for the School Community	guide
Charter School Handbook	guide
Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper (Dec. 1994)	guide
Advisory Manual on ECS for the Incorporated Non-Profit Society or Private School	guide
Alberta Student Exchange Handbook	guide

RESULTS REPORTING	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Legislation	Legislation
regulatory	
Accountability in Education: Policy Framework	regulatory
School Board Annual Results Report format and reporting requirements	regulatory
guide/regulatory	
Guide to Planning and Reporting by School Authorities	guide/regulatory
A More Accountable Education System, Accountability Policies (Oct 1995)	guide/regulatory
guide	
News Releases	guide
Accountability in Education: A Discussion Paper	guide
Meeting the Challenge II: Three Year Business Plan	guide
Minister of Education's annual performance reports to the legislature	report
Quarterly reports to Treasury	report
Annual Alberta Education Performance Results Report	report
Satisfactions with Education in Alberta Report	report
Provincial Annual Report	report
Alberta Children and Youth: Trends and Issues 1995	report
In Focus	report
Diploma Examinations Program Annual Report	report

FUNDING / ALLOCATION / MONITORING / OPERATIONS	
Legislation	
School Act	Legislation
Government Organization Act	Legislation
Regulation	
Funding for School Authorities in the 1995-96 School Year: A Manual for School Jurisdictions, Private Schools and Private ECS Operators	Regulation
Funding for School Authorities Manual	Regulation
Education Plans to the Minister	Regulation
Student Transportation Regulation	Regulation
Alberta Distance Learning Centre Regulation	Regulation
Alberta School for the Deaf Grants Regulation	Regulation
Alberta School Foundation Fund 1994-95 Regulation	Regulation
Collection of School Taxes in National Parks Regulation	Regulation
Disposition of Property Regulation	Regulation
Early Childhood Services Regulation	Regulation
Insurance Regulation	Regulation
School Buildings and Tendering Regulation	Regulation
Special School Tax Levy Plebiscite Regulation	Regulation
Student Transportation Regulation	Regulation
Superintendent of Schools Regulation	Regulation
Ward System Regulation	Regulation
School Grants Regulation	Regulation
Ministerial Order and Directive	
HIV/AIDS in Educational Settings	Ministerial Order and Directive
Policy	
School-based Decision Making Policy	Policy
Superintendent Approval Policy	Policy
School Council Policy	Policy
Review by the Minister Policy	Policy
Attendance Board Policy	Policy
Guidance and Counselling Policy	Policy
Management and Finance Plan	Policy
regulatory	
Education Tax Rates for Municipalities	regulatory
Policy on Administrative Spending (CAP)	regulatory
School Capital Funding Policies, Regulations and Guidelines Manual (1995)	regulatory
guide	
Audited Financial Statement (AFS) Guidelines	guide
Budget Report Form (BRF)	guide
Budget Report Form (BRF) Guidelines	guide
Francophone Governance Implementation Handbook	guide
Program Accounting and Reporting (PAR) Manual (1995)	guide
Guide for Developing 1995 School Board Interim Education Plans	guide
Guide for Developing 1995 School Board Annual Education Reports	guide
Guideline on Regionalization	guide
School Council Handbook	guide
Guideline on Establishment of Consortia	guide

INTERNAL DEPARTMENT EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS	
<i>guide</i>	
3 Year Business Plan "Meeting the Challenge II"	guide
Business Plan Implementation Plan and Responsibility Matrix	guide
Department of Education Corporate Records: File Manual	guide
Department Strategic Plan - Technology	guide
Department Strategic Plan - Human Resources	guide
Department Communications Plan	guide
Department Deregulation Plan	guide
<i>process</i>	
Performance Management System (HR)	process
Goal-oriented Departmental Budget and Expenditure Tracking	process
<i>report</i>	
Internal Business Plan Progress Reports	report
Quarterly Results Report to Treasury	report
Minister of Education's annual performance report to the legislature	report
Annual Alberta Education Performance Results Report	report

Appendix 4 - Participants

Provincial Education Organization Information Session Participants

- David Anderson, Executive Director
Alberta School Boards Association
- Mary Anne Bahsillie, Executive Director
Alberta Home & School Councils' Association
- Elizabeth Dobrovolsky, President
Alberta Home & School Councils' Association
- Dick Dornstauder, President
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- Muriel Dunnigan, Past President
College of Alberta School Superintendent
- Donna Engel, Manager Outreach
Alberta School Boards Association
- Neil Gannon, Executive Director
College of Alberta School Superintendent
- Charles Hyman, Associate Executive Secretary
Alberta Teachers' Association
- Susan Lang, Executive Director
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta

Focus Group Participants

Principals, Teachers, Parents

November 28/December 4/December 11/

December 18, 1995

- Dale Armstrong, Director
Edmonton Public Schools
- Mary Bartko, Teacher
Edmonton Public Schools
Bannerman
- Robert Bisson, Teacher
Edmonton Catholic Schools
St. Francis Xavier
- Kerry Coxen, Teacher
Sturgeon School District #24
Sturgeon Composite High School
- Paulette Hanna, Principal
East Central Alberta Catholic School Reg. Div. #16
St. Jerome's, Vermilion
- Pat Hogaboam, Principal
Edmonton Public Schools
McKernan
- Tom Howard, Principal
Edmonton Public Schools
Capilano
- Dave Jorgensen, Principal
Black Gold
Warburg High School
- Ken Riva-Cambrin, Principal
Edmonton Catholic Schools
Mt. Carmel
- Gerry Schick, Principal
Sturgeon School District #24
Redwater School

-
- E.K. Stauffer, Principal
Battle River #31
Round Hill
 - Jack Vanden Pol, Principal
Central Alberta Christian High School
 - Grant Sharp, Teacher
Wolf Creek
Ponoka Composite High School
 - Mary Shearer, Teacher
Edmonton Public Schools
Windsor Park
 - Victor Steel, Teacher
Fort McMurray Catholic #32
Father Mercredi
 - Larry Stewart, Special Education Coordinator
Northern Gateway
Fox Creek School
 - P. Daryl Wilson, Parent
Edmonton Catholic Schools
St. Kevin & St. James
 - Debbie Windwick, Teacher
Edmonton Public Schools
Queen Mary Park
 - Jam Winter, Parent
Edmonton Public Schools
McArthur
 - Trudy Buelow, Parent
Grande Prairie School District #2357
Grande Prairie Composite High
 - Phyllis Kornder, Department Head/Teacher
Grande Prairie Separate
St. Joseph Catholic

-
- Kip Kurylo, Principal
Grande Prairie School District #2357
Ecole Parkside
 - Rodney Lee, Principal
Peace Wapiti
Harry Balfour
 - Laureen Lushman, Principal
Grande Prairie Catholic
St. Patrick Catholic School
 - Steven Prusak, Teacher
Peace River School District
Hines Creek
 - Howard Rasmusson, Principal
Fort Vermilion School District
Fort Vermilion Public School
 - Flora Altieri, Vice Principal
Calgary Board of Education
Leroi/Fairview
 - Michael Barbero, Principal
Calgary Roman Catholic Separate
Bishop Carroll High School
 - Tom Brown, Principal
Foothills
Joe Clark School
 - Courtney Faber, Teacher
Rocky View School Division
Springbank Middle School
 - Walter Holt, Principal
Calgary Board of Education
Crescent Heights High School
 - Theresa Lewis, Principal
Calgary Board of Education

-
- Rodney McElroy, Vice Principal
Clearview Regional
Stettler Elementary
 - Wendy Ohlhauser, Parent
Calgary Board of Education
Acadia/Fairview
 - Brian O'Toole, Principal
Canadian Rockies
Canmore Collegiate
 - Rob Pirie, Teacher
Golden Hills Region
Strathmore High
 - Sandy Antonini, Parent/School Council Chair
Medicine Hat School District #76
Connaught
 - Wayne Bennett, Principal/Teacher
Palliser Regional Schools
Arrowwood
 - Susan Chomistek, Principal
Grasslands Regional Division #6
Rolling Hills School
 - Ken Dick, Principal
Medicine Hat #20
McCoy
 - Don Gellatly, Principal
Horizon #67
Milk River
 - Drena George, Teacher
Newell Christian School/Grasslands
Brooks
 - Gordon Haag, Principal
Prairie Rose #8
Oyen Public

-
- Val Kurio, Teacher
Horizon #67
D.A. Ferguson
 - John Loree, Principal
Lethbridge School District #51
General Stewart
 - Nora MacGregor, Teacher/Parent
Lethbridge Public #41
Wilson Middle School
 - Rick Massini, Vice Principal
Medicine Hat #76
Medicine Hat High School
 - Edmond Rocheleau, Principal
Holy Spirit Catholic School District #4
Catholic Central High School
 - Dean Rook, Teacher
Holy Spirit Catholic School District #4
Catholic Central High School
 - Rob Schellenberg, Parent/School Council
Prairie Rose #8
Senator Gershaw
 - Glenn Secretan, Teacher
Palliser
Picture Butte High School
 - Laurie Steinbach, Counsellor/Parent
Grasslands
Bassano
 - Kent Wood, Vice Principal
Westwinds Regional #9
Stirling

Focus Group Participants

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers

November 28/December 4/December 11/

December 18, 1995

- Dick Bennett, Secretary-Treasurer
Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Ron Craddock, Area Director
Northern Gateway
- Lucien Duigon, Superintendent
Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Andy Isbister, Secretary-Treasurer
Fort Saskatchewan Catholic Schools
- Gary Krawchuk, Secretary-Treasurer
Northern Lights School District #69
- Angus McBeath, Department Head
Edmonton Public Schools
- Bruce McIntosh, Department Head
Edmonton Public Schools
- Gordon Miller, Trustee
St. Albert Public Schools #6
- Michele Mulder, Trustee
Battle River Regional
- George Nicholson, Trustee
Edmonton Public Schools
- Tom Olson, Secretary-Treasurer
Parkland No. 70
- G.R. Pibrovec, Principal
Private School District
Bilingual Montessori School
- Dean Power, Treasurer
Edmonton Public Schools

-
- Sig Schmold, Superintendent
Pembina Hills Regional
 - Al Summers, Secretary-Treasurer
Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division #29
 - Richard Vance, Trustee
Buffalo Trail Regional
 - John Waddell, Superintendent
Fort McMurray Public
 - Dave Young, Superintendent
Parkland No. 70
 - Ron Zapisocki, Trustee
Edmonton Catholic Schools
 - Wes Brooks, Assistant Superintendent
Grande Prairie Public School District #2357
 - Mike Davenport, Superintendent
Fort Vermilion School Division
 - Dennis Grant, Superintendent
Grande Prairie & District Catholic Schools #28
 - Paulette Kurylo, Trustee
Grande Prairie Public School District #2357
 - Grant Mann, Secretary-Treasurer
Fort Vermilion School Division #52
 - Gerry Mazer, Superintendent
Peace Wapiti School Board
 - Dave Salter, Secretary-Treasurer
Hillcrest Christian Social Schools
 - Clair Belshea, Secretary-Treasurer
Foothills School District #38
 - Wayne Braun, Secretary-Treasurer
Golden Hills Regional Division No. 15

-
- Colleen Brownlee, Superintendent
Rocky View School Division
 - Ray Congdon, Assistant Superintendent
Red Deer Public School District #104
 - Susan Denischuk, Chairperson (Trustee)
Chinook's Edge
 - Bill Dickson, Deputy Chief Superintendent
Calgary Public Schools
 - Karen Harries, Trustee
Golden Hills
 - Lenore Harris, Trustee (Chair)
Red Deer Public #104
 - Linda Pipe, Trustee
Foothills School District #38
 - Jennifer Pollock, Trustee
Calgary Board of Education
 - Susan Roy, Treasurer
Chinook's Edge RD
 - Ted Sullivan, Trustee
Calgary Catholic
 - Henry Zondervan, Superintendent
Heritage Christian School
 - Dave Beresh, Deputy Superintendent
Medicine Hat School District
 - Lloyd Cavers, Superintendent
Horizon School District #67
 - Karen Charlton, Chair
Medicine Hat School District #76
 - Cliff Elle, Superintendent
Livingstone Range School Division

-
- Aileen Gibb, Chair
Westwind
 - Tony Giesinger, Secretary-Treasurer
Medicine Hat Catholic
 - Dunc Gillespie, Superintendent
Grasslands #6
 - Pat Glashan, Superintendent
Medicine Hat Catholic
 - G. Kiernan, Superintendent
Lethbridge School District #51
 - Lowell Leffler, Director of Education
Prairie Rose
 - Frank Letain, Superintendent
Holy Spirit Catholic School District #4
 - Ralph Light, Principal
Newell Christian School
 - Don Lussier, Associate Superintendent, Business Affairs
Lethbridge School District #51
 - Terry Morris, Trustee (Vice Chair)
Lethbridge School District #51
 - Don Olsen, Treasurer
Livingstone Range School Division
 - Ben Widmer, Vice Chair
Prairie Rose

Advisory Group Workshop Participants

January 30 & 31, 1996

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Mary Cameron | - Vice President of Capital City Savings
Vice Chair of Edmonton Power |
| Dan Chugg | - President of Vicom Multimedia Inc. |
| Michael Strembitsky | - Former Superintendent of Edmonton
Public School Board

Currently with National Center of
Education & Economy (Washington,
DC) |
| Sandra Weidner | - Former President of Alberta School
Boards Association |
| Ian Winchester | - Dean of Education,
University of Calgary |

Second Round of Focus Group Participants

January 30 & 31, 1996

- Dick Bennett, Secretary-Treasurer
Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Wes Brooks, Assistant Superintendent
Grande Prairie Public School District #2357
- Paulette Hanna, Principal
East Central Alberta Catholic School Reg. Div. #16
St. Jerome's, Vermilion
- Pat Hogaboam, Principal
Edmonton Public Schools
McKernan
- Dave Jorgensen, Principal
Black Gold
Warburg High School
- Lowell Leffler, Deputy Superintendent
Prairie Rose #8
- Bruce McIntosh, Department Head
Edmonton Public Schools
- Dean Power, Treasurer
Edmonton Public Schools
- Sig Schmold, Superintendent
Pembina Hills Regional
- Al Summers, Secretary-Treasurer
Greater St. Alberta Catholic Schools #29
- John Waddell, Superintendent
Fort McMurray Public
- Clair Belshea, Secretary-Treasurer
Foothills School District #38
- Colleen Brownlee, Superintendent
Rocky View School Division
- Ray Congdon, Assistant Superintendent
Red Deer Public School District #104

-
- Bill Dickson, Deputy Chief Superintendent
Calgary Public Schools
 - Gary Kiernan, Superintendent
Lethbridge School District #51
 - Don Lussier, Associate Superintendent, Business Affairs
Lethbridge School District #51
 - Rodney McElroy, Vice Principal
Clearview Regional
Stettler Elementary
 - Brian O'Toole, Principal
Canadian Rockies
Canmore Collegiate
 - Ted Sullivan, Trustee
Calgary Catholic

Appendix 5 - Detailed Discussion of Stakeholder Feedback

Detailed feedback from focus group participants regarding Alberta Education's policy implementation mechanisms in place as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department is provided in this Appendix, which is divided in the following sections:

- A5.1 External focus groups with trustees, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, principals, teachers and parents.
- A5.2 Internal Alberta Education Directors focus group.
- A5.3 Comparison of internal/external feedback on effectiveness and appropriateness of Alberta Education mechanisms.
- A5.4 Organizational Change Management assessments of Alberta Education staff.

In each of these sections, we provide a summary of the key findings of each group of focus group sessions, as well as many direct comments of the focus group participants. The comments provided are those which were consistently expressed at stakeholder feedback sessions. These comments are diverse in viewpoints and at times contradictory, and are the views and opinions as expressed by the focus group participants. Comments reflect focus group participants' perceptions and may or may not be factually accurate.

As well, much of the feedback from focus group participants centered around opportunities for improvement within the Department. The information provided in this Appendix focuses primarily on those areas for improvement. This does not suggest general dissatisfaction amongst education stakeholders with the performance by Alberta Education. There was broad recognition by education stakeholders of the strengths within Alberta Education. Some of these include:

- Maintenance of an excellent education system within the Province of Alberta;
- Recognition the Department has been functioning within a significant environment of change and is being faced with resource reductions;
- Alberta Education staff are a dedicated, competent group of individuals committed to the well being of the province's education system;
- The alignment of the Department's budget to goals identified within the business plan is seen as positive and the Department is a leader within government in that regard; and

-
- The development of measurers by which to monitor the performance of the education system is a positive direction.

The detailed discussion of education stakeholder feedback is provided in the following sections.

A5.1 External Focus Groups

A series of eight focus groups were held throughout the province. These were held in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge. In total, 108 participants from a broad cross section of school jurisdictions attended these sessions.

Two focus groups were held in each of the four locations. One focus group consisted of a random selection of school board superintendents, secretary-treasurers and trustees and the other focus group consisted of a random selection of principals, teachers and a representative parent. The sampling included representation from both urban and rural areas from the public and separate systems as well as private schools.

Focus group sessions were facilitated using electronic polling technology as an aide. Issues were presented to focus group participants and, with wireless, hand-held response units, they were able to indicate their rating for each issue. Their input was fed directly into a portable computer and was summarized and analyzed instantaneously. The results were displayed using computer projection so all participants could see the issues that were judged to be most important or least important to the group.

The use of this technology was not to arrive at a statistically valid indication of opinions. Rather the quantitative results of the electronic polling technology served to "point the way" to issues, highlighting the force of themes and direction. The results then facilitated discussion and input from focus group participants regarding issues.

Focus group sessions were facilitated by presenting a series of statements and asking the groups to rate the statements based on a pre-determined scale using the electronic polling technology. Using the quantitative results as a framework for discussion, significant qualitative feedback was obtained from focus group participants on the issues being addressed.

The following sub-sections provide the feedback obtained at the focus group sessions. These sections are presented as follows:

- the statement being addressed;
- the electronic balloting feedback results;
- focus group participants comments and feedback.

The electronic polling results should not be taken as a statistically valid indication of opinions or views. In fact, on many issues there was a great divergence of positions which would not be reflected in examining the mean averages only. In addition, some participants expressed a discomfort in taking very complex and multi-dimensional issues and providing a single rating of position.

The focus group participants' comments and feedback presented are intended to capture the spirit of discussion and often reflect the divergence of opinions. The comments provided are in cryptic form and reflect the views and opinions of participants.

General Statements about Alberta Education

We asked the focus group participants to provide input and comments about Alberta Education's operation and the business plan by using eight general statements to prompt the discussion. The input and comments received are summarized below, and grouped under each of the eight statements. The electronic polling mean averages are provided below based on a 5 point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

	Degree of Agreement	
	Trustees/ Superintendents/ Sec-Treasurers	Principals/ Teachers/ Parents
Alberta Education's business plan goals are known by your education stakeholder group.	3.6	3.0
Your education stakeholder group clearly understands its role and responsibilities with respect to the business plan goals.	3.3	2.6
The mix of Alberta Education regulations/controls ("thou shall") and Alberta Education guidelines ("thou should") is appropriate.	2.3	2.7
Alberta Education effectively fulfils its role in the education system.	2.6	2.7
Alberta Education is efficient.	2.2	2.4
Alberta Education clearly communicates with its education stakeholders.	2.4	2.4
Alberta Education supports policy directions with adequate and appropriate detail.	2.6	2.6
Alberta Education provides policy direction support on a timely basis.	2.2	2.3

1. Alberta Education's business plan goals are known by education stakeholder group.

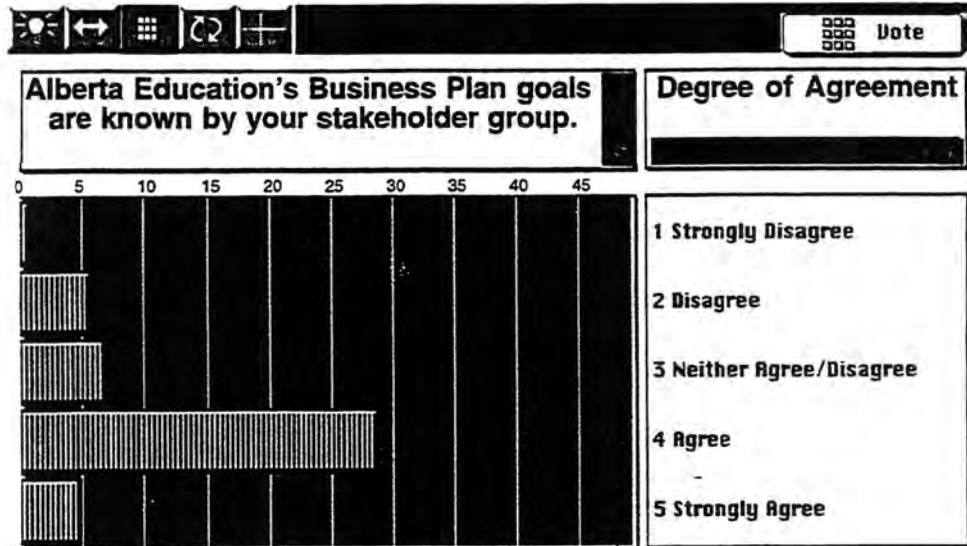
The awareness and understanding of the goals in Alberta Education's business plan is greatest amongst superintendents, secretary-treasurers and trustees. Principals seem to have moderate awareness. The lowest awareness is amongst the teachers and parents.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

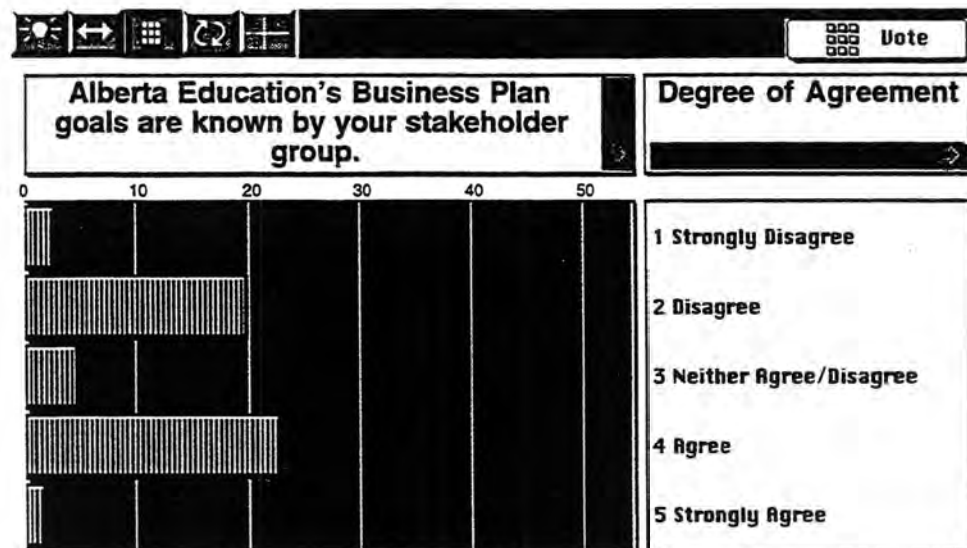
- Typically, most principals, teachers and parents are not familiar with the business plan and the nine goals.
- Most trustees and school board administrators are familiar with the business plan and goals.
- Teachers have limited interest in Alberta Education's business plan. Their local school board plans are more relevant.
- Generally, parents are not aware there is a business plan for education.
- Principals are aware of the business plan, but most have likely only given it a cursory review.
- Too many different "plans" coming out of Alberta Education, which results in lack of awareness of the business plan.
- The business plan goals are generally not communicated down to teachers/parents.
- Too much information coming out of Alberta Education; many people have overlooked the business plan.
- Too many things (goals and strategies) in the business plan.
- "Business plan" is a bad name - it suggests that the contents are only financially oriented.
- Goals are not measurable.
- Notwithstanding the stated scope of this assignment that focuses only on the implementation of government policy, Alberta Education should be seeking education stakeholder feedback on the actual goals (policy). The goals may be wrong.

The electronic polling responses to the "goals" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



2. *My education stakeholder group clearly understands its role and responsibilities with respect to the business plan.*

While many of the external education stakeholders are aware of the business plan and its goals, generally there is less clarity amongst education stakeholders as to their group's role and responsibilities with respect to the business plan. Principals and teachers were more likely than trustees, and school board administrators to be unclear as to their role and responsibilities.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

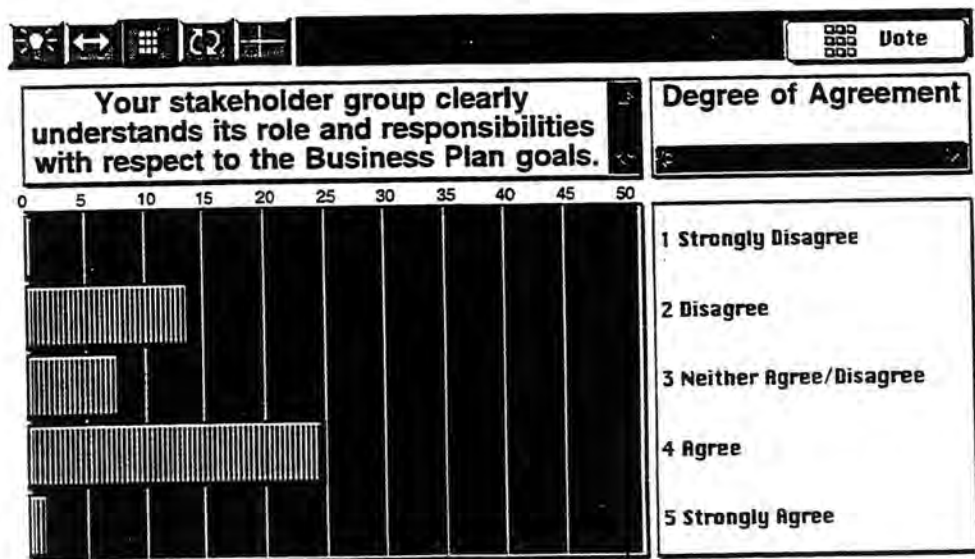
- It is important that all education stakeholders know and understand what to do with respect to the goals for education. Alberta Education has mandated that each school board's 3 year plan must address certain business plan goals of Alberta Education.
- Trustees are struggling to understand their roles, partly today, but particularly into the future. What will happen at the end of 3 year business plan?
- There is general confusion about roles and responsibilities; much "guessing" is going on.
- Roles and responsibilities are still being determined.
- Generally, education stakeholders are more concerned about their roles and responsibilities with respect to local (school board/school) plans than with Alberta Education's plan.
- There is difference of opinion amongst education stakeholders as to the clarity of roles and responsibilities flowing from the business plan.
- A specific area of unclear responsibility is in the current "ambiguity of Superintendent accountability". Several trustees and superintendents expressed confusion regarding to whom the superintendent is accountable (school board trustees vs. Minister).
- Another specific area of unclear responsibility involves the preparation and approval of School Board Interim Education Plans. School board trustees submit the Interim Plan to Alberta Education, but Alberta Education meets with superintendents to review and obtain the superintendent's "sign-off" on the Interim Plan. This process implies the superintendent prepared and approved the Interim Plan, when the school board trustees are really responsible. An improvement would be for Alberta

Education to meet directly with the school board trustees to review and approve the Interim Plan.

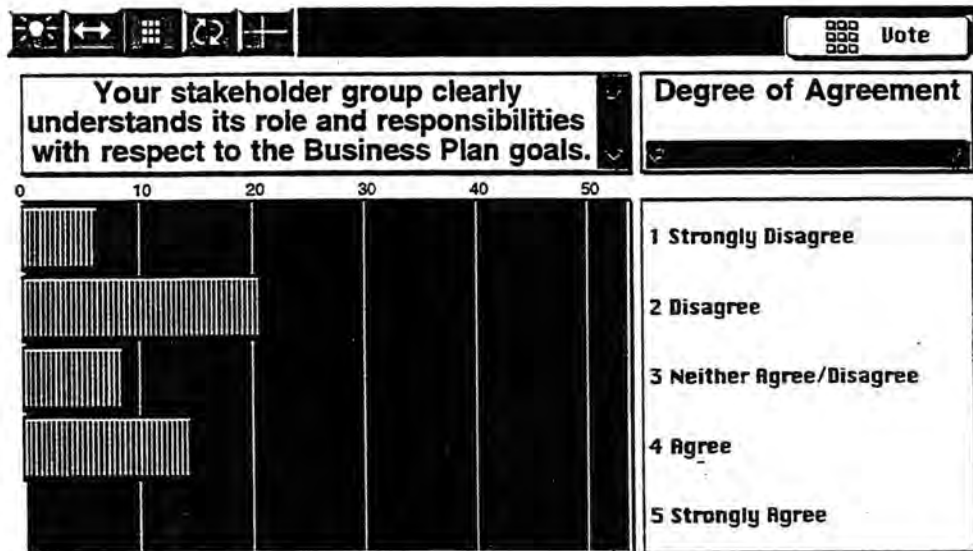
- Some understand their role and responsibilities, others do not.
- There are some difference between proposed, perceived and actual roles (e.g. School Councils - many perceive they have power, but are actually advisory only).
- Trustees perceive their role is unchanged - but it has changed as a result of the business plan.
- The "Roles and Responsibilities" position paper helped clarify each education stakeholder's role.
- The strategies that support the business plan goals are subject to interpretation by different education stakeholders. This results in lack of clarity in responsibilities for implementing the strategies, and what is to be implemented.

The electronic polling responses to the "roles" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



3. *The mix of Alberta Education regulations/controls ("thou shall") and Alberta Education guidelines ("thou should") is appropriate.*

The mix of Alberta Education regulations/controls and guidelines was an important issue amongst the external education stakeholders. In summary, the external education stakeholders believe that:

- there are too many regulations/controls, and also too many guidelines issued by Alberta Education;
- Alberta Education regulations/controls and guidelines are too detailed, and restrict school boards ability to develop and implement innovative delivery models; and
- there is a lack of clarity between regulations/controls and guidelines.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

- "Shalls" and "Shoulds" are not clear.
- Many policies need legal interpretation.
- Only regulations and guidelines that impact funding are viewed to be important by some school board administrators. If a regulation does not impact funding, then it can be ignored.

- Alberta Education issues regulations for the entire province that it views as being "fair" because they apply uniformly across the province. Not all areas of province are the same, and there are different local needs. The result is that Alberta Education regulations are uniform and "unfair".
- Problems result because of trying to implement one model (regulation/policy) in all 66 school boards, irrespective of anomalies across the province.
- "Rules" do not fit all 66 school boards.
- Alberta Education does not operate the way they say school boards should operate (i.e., centralized vs. decentralized). Alberta Education has mandated school-based management (decentralized decision-making), yet school boards feel restricted from making independent decisions as a result of Alberta Education's controls.
- Alberta Education should get out of the "regulation" business, it conflicts with the theory of site-based or school-based decision-making and management.
- Alberta Education's approach is now goal oriented (as per the business plan), but they have not given up their regulation/control orientation.
- Alberta should be out of the process -- focus on monitoring the results attained by school boards.
- Alberta Education should remove "process" controls, and allow the taxpayers to determine if school boards are effective at educating students.
- Alberta Education should eliminate all funding blocks and restrictions, and empower school boards to manage their gross funding to maximize results.
- "Thou shalls" should be limited.
- There should be opportunities for school boards to communicate problems with regulations. Some regulations do not make sense given the legislation.
- The "have to's" in Alberta Education policies are actually regulations. So in fact, there are many more than 17 Regulations (School Act).

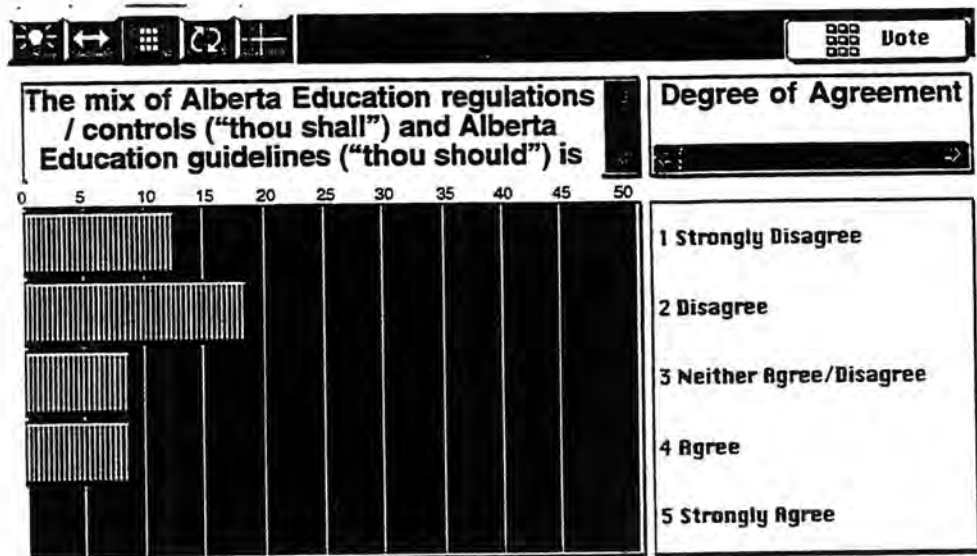
- Alberta Education is perceived to be a very centralized, control-oriented system. They mandate:
 - how and when to teach;
 - how to publish results;
 - school board spending allocations
- Many things that are mandated cannot be measured, so there is no point in mandating.
- Some view all funding (spending) regulations should be eliminated.
- Too many regulations in the funding envelopes.
- Examples of regulations that education stakeholders believe are too onerous include:
 - Disposition of Property Regulations
 - Transportation Regulations
 - School Closures
 - Building Quality Restoration Program
 - Calendar/Times and Hours
 - Psychologist hiring/asset purchasing - okay if at school-level, not okay if done centrally
 - School-based vs. central purchasing
- Lack of consultation before regulations are developed and issued. The government's approach is characterized by not seeking advice from trustees and superintendents as to what is the appropriate level of control.
- Superintendents believe there is a legal obligation to follow Alberta Education regulations, and they make efforts to comply. Belief that Alberta Education's role in ensuring their compliance is minimal.
- Alberta Education is properly involved in regulating certain things, such as curriculum, but in other areas they have implemented too many controls.
- Results are important; how you get there is not.

-
- School councils are over-regulated, and this is detracting from their effectiveness. Supporting comments:
 - Formal information reports have scared off previously committed parents. The net result is that it is now difficult to get parent involvement in school councils.
 - Parent councils were in place in many schools. These groups did not want formal mechanisms in place controlling their operations.
 - School council "Shalls" eroded parents'/principals' ability to be effective.
 - The spending restriction on central administration has resulted in "games" being played by the school board administrators. For example, in one school board, Central Psychological Services were budgeted at 2.4% of the school board's funding. Alberta Education reviewed the budget and mandated this spending to be reduced. The school board then changed their budget reports to show this spending at the school level, and Alberta Education approved the budget.
 - Compliance rules take away from school boards' capacity to effectively manage their systems. For example, the 1.6% limit on "Support" has resulted in a lack of services that impacts:
 - curriculum support;
 - special programs for ESL, Special Needs;
 - lunchroom programs;
 - flexible transportation.
 - Too much time is being taken preparing reports and filling out forms to satisfy Alberta Education regulations.
 - Alberta Education regulations create a "paper chase", that does not help ensure children learn.
 - Alberta Education implements too many province-wide operational controls that are not proven to positively impact student learning.
 - Too many report deadlines, report content specifications, and assessments by Alberta Education.
 - Alberta Education has moved toward implementing detailed regulations, as opposed to assisting school boards.

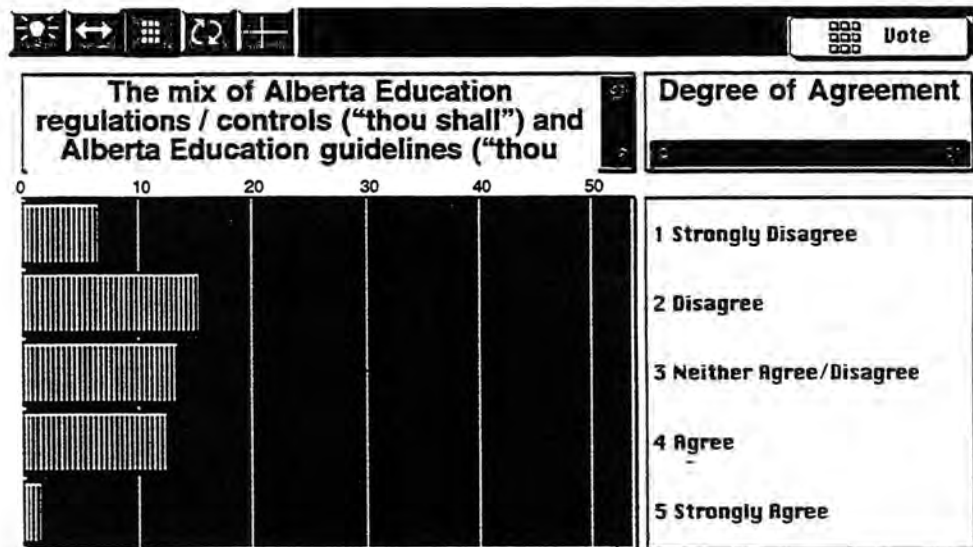
- The current funding framework has fewer ear-marked grants, but lower overall flexibility.
- There is too much regulation. Even when opinions of external education stakeholders are requested and received, and education stakeholders indicate that regulations are not required, Alberta Education still implements too many detailed regulations. For example:
 - results reporting - Board's autonomy taken away;
 - funding issues - Board doesn't have authority because Alberta Education attaches dollars to actions.

The electronic polling responses to the "mix" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



4. Alberta Education effectively fulfils its role in the education system.

The external education stakeholders believe that Alberta Education's effectiveness is weak because of a lack of focus on its core role. For the most part, the external education stakeholders agreed that Alberta Education's role involves three key activities:

- Establish curriculum;
- Equitably allocate provincial funds to school boards;
- Monitor educational results obtained by school boards, and take action where results are not attained.

There were concerns expressed that Alberta Education's effectiveness in fulfilling its core roles is slipping because of resource constraints. As well, many of the external education stakeholders felt that Alberta Education was shifting responsibility down to school boards, schools and parents without providing additional funding to enable these groups to fulfil these new responsibilities.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

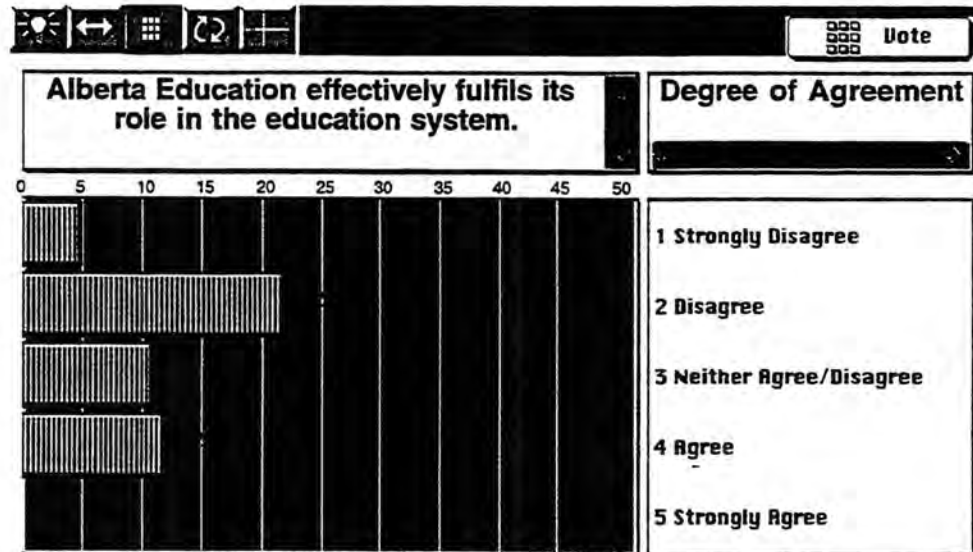
- Alberta Education's role is to set standards (curriculum), test to ensure standards are being met, and report the results.

-
- Alberta Education is not doing the “right” things, and this impacts their effectiveness. They should focus on doing important things right and on time:
 - count credits properly (CEUs)
 - Grade 12 Diploma exam results on time
 - Grade 3, 6, 9 Achievement test analysis on time
 - ensure policies are consistent with each other
 - Alberta Education is administering many more provincial tests (90,000 to 600,00), but they have not added more staff. As a result they are ineffective (results are late and incomplete).
 - Alberta Education is required by government to do a lot of paperwork that has nothing to do with the classrooms. This work does nothing to enhance student learning and performance.
 - Alberta Education's effectiveness is being impacted by workloads. Much of their time spent on action requests, and on political issues.
 - Alberta Education is overwhelmed -- contact with local school systems non-existent.
 - Effectiveness is sliding because of staff reductions.
 - Processes are not in place for Alberta Education to deal with emerging issues. They speed up timelines too fast, and they end up backtracking on decisions.
 - School boards receive very little actual support from Alberta Education. For example, Alberta Education's critiquing of a school board's 3 year plan was completed by one Alberta Education staff member in one afternoon and was of questionable value.
 - It is often difficult to access information in Alberta Education.
 - "They are supposed to ensure compliance of school boards with regulations, but they had one staff person come up to review our school board, and the only comment was that the school board was slightly below the number of instructional hours required. This sort of review is ineffective at improving student results."
 - Lack of trust in Alberta Education by education stakeholders.

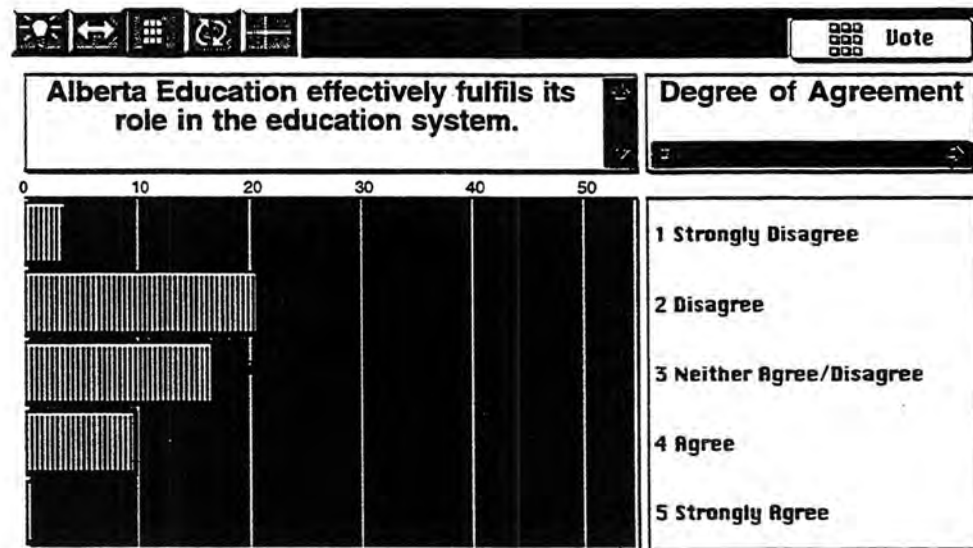
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- Alberta Education has effectively dealt with the equity of school board funding issue. For many years, school boards were unable to agree on how to resolve the disparate levels of funding, but it has now been resolved.
 - Not providing leadership in technology or reporting system.
 - Alberta Education still provides leadership in curriculum, but a belief this is starting to slide in quality because of resourcing reductions.
 - Department does not have a "customer focused" orientation.
 - Alberta Education has not adjusted to the new era of focus on "results". They are still trying to control school boards.
 - Alberta Education and stakeholders are not parent/child focused. They are focused on devising innovative, special programs that satisfy the "educators" who are delivering the service.
 - Not enough Alberta Education staff have recent field experience, and as a result their decisions are impractical.
 - Most of the Alberta Education staff are hard working, education focused, but they are struggling to deal with the "paradigm shift" of monitoring results as opposed to controlling process.
 - Alberta Education should quit "doing" things. They should focus on setting policy, and then let school boards "do" the work within the general policy framework.

The electronic polling responses to the "effectively" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



5. Alberta Education is efficient.

The external education stakeholders recognize that Alberta Education's operating budget has been reduced, but they do not believe that these reductions have necessarily created efficiencies. Many of the external education stakeholders' comments indicated lack of satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of the Department's outputs, and they seemed to believe that reduced

resources was the contributing cause. The external education stakeholders believe there is a lack of co-ordination and co-operation within the Department, and this results in inefficiencies.

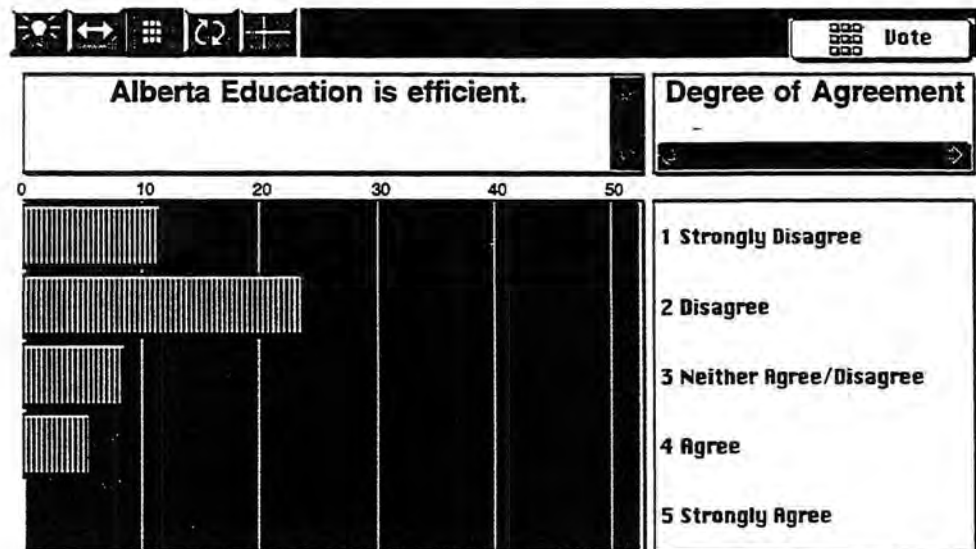
Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

- Lack of up-front consultation with education stakeholders causes Alberta Education to be inefficient. Without up-front consultation, Alberta Education issues policies and guidelines that are not appropriate. After the field reacts negatively, Alberta Education reworks them and reissues them.
- Alberta Education does not have enough resources to be efficient.
- They are doing the best they can, given their budget cuts.
- Alberta Education is trying to be efficient, but they are creating a tremendous amount of work for school boards.
- There is a lack of co-ordination within Alberta Education.
- Alberta Education's focus is wrong. They should stop writing regulations and prescribing formats, and concentrate on their important roles. Only then will they become efficient.
- e.g. EIE - eliminate double funding; Achievement results came out in graph form - easy to read; now coming out in tables which are difficult to read
- Achievement exams/results reporting - Achievement test results were just received 3-4 weeks ago although tested in June. The results are to enable teachers to adjust, however, results came out too late. Item by item analysis is not out yet.
- Need to restructure/refocus - emphasis should be in:
 - curriculum development and implementation
 - setting the outcomes/goals
 - assist in setting standards
 - work with deficient school boards
- ECS "debacle" is an example of inefficient decision-making. A quick decision (efficient), resulted in much time being wasted on defending the decision.
- Litigation on constitutional issues is inefficient.
- Alberta Education does not have an efficiency mindset.

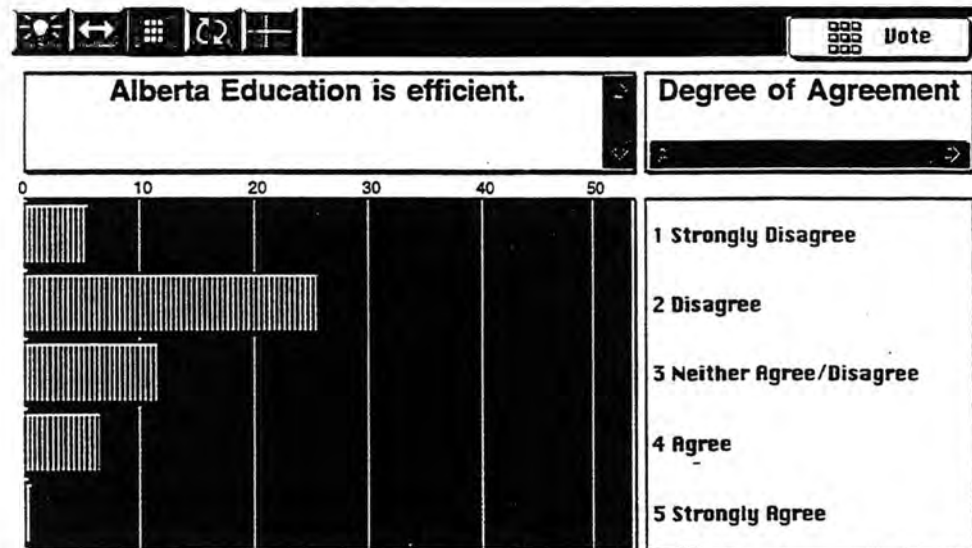
- Different Alberta Education staff make different interpretations of Alberta Education policies. This causes extra work for school boards and for Alberta Education because of inconsistent application of policies, which leads to disputes.
- Alberta Education is brutally efficient.

The electronic polling responses to the "efficient" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



6. *Alberta Education clearly communicates with its education stakeholders.*

The external education stakeholders were clear in indicating that Alberta Education is weak at communicating information to education stakeholders. They feel Alberta Education is strong in creating and sending "information", but weak in actual communication. They believe Alberta Education's weaknesses in communication are:

- too much information;
- inappropriate form and communication media;
- lacking in priority;
- lack of timeliness; and
- lack of communication protocol.

However, the external education stakeholders believe the content of information issued by Alberta Education is good.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

Volume

- Too much information across desk to read and understand all of it.
- Too much "stuff" from Alberta Education.

-
- Cannot read all the information, because we are focused on teaching.
 - We need to be selective in what is read, because of time constraints
 - We are being flooded with information. There simply is too much reading to be done. Perhaps, summaries can be created.
 - People don't want to read more than 2 pages.
 - Too many documents.
 - Lengthen timelines for feedback, particularly when input is being sought from parents.
 - Too much information that is not relevant to particular education stakeholder groups.
 - The volume of documents issued to parents exceeds their available time and interest.
 - Parents want Alberta Education to communicate, but they want Alberta Education to be succinct, and focus on major issues.
 - For real communication, there needs to be the opportunity (time) for people to read, ask questions, and be trained.
 - Alberta Education is not listening to practitioners as much as they did 15 years ago.
 - Volume is too much -- it is impossible to keep up.
 - Alberta Education should track the volume of issued documents by putting a copy of every piece of paper issued to the field in a room for one year.

Form

- Maybe distinctions should be made on different types of information (e.g. some communication in person, some written)
- Method - consider electronic communication
- Most communication by paper; face to face would be more valuable, and would help ensure more clear communication.
- Face to face would be better than written - e.g. through Regional Offices.
- Communication must be two-way to be effective. They are very good at one way communication by issuing documents, but weak

at supporting or consulting on the interpretation of the documents.

- Many people have not seen the Provincial Results Report. This suggests that a written booklet might not be the best medium for communicating these results.
- Written documents are not the best for communicating to all education stakeholders. Alberta Education should consider the use of TV ads, videotapes and newspaper ads.

Timeliness

- Timeliness of most communication is a big problem.
 - achievement results
 - general information bulletins on Diploma Exams
- Consultation is not effective because timelines for input are too short.
- Communication too late; time frame too short (not timely)
- Examples of poor timeliness:
 - Transportation rates set by school boards in June 1995, and then Alberta Education released a Regulation on August 28th that made changes effective September 1st.
 - School Council Handbook policies late.
 - Guidelines on preparing Interim Education Plans late.
 - Achievement Test results and analysis not issued until December and January.
- Fast pace of change has caused some confused communication out of Alberta Education

Protocol

- "Press" often gets information on Alberta Education first (before superintendents) common problems in urban and rural.
- Different areas within Alberta Education don't communicate well (contradict each other at times).
- No protocols within Alberta Education and within the jurisdictions on how communication should be taking place. Current practice seems to be as if anyone from Alberta Education can contact anyone at a school board/school and vice versa.

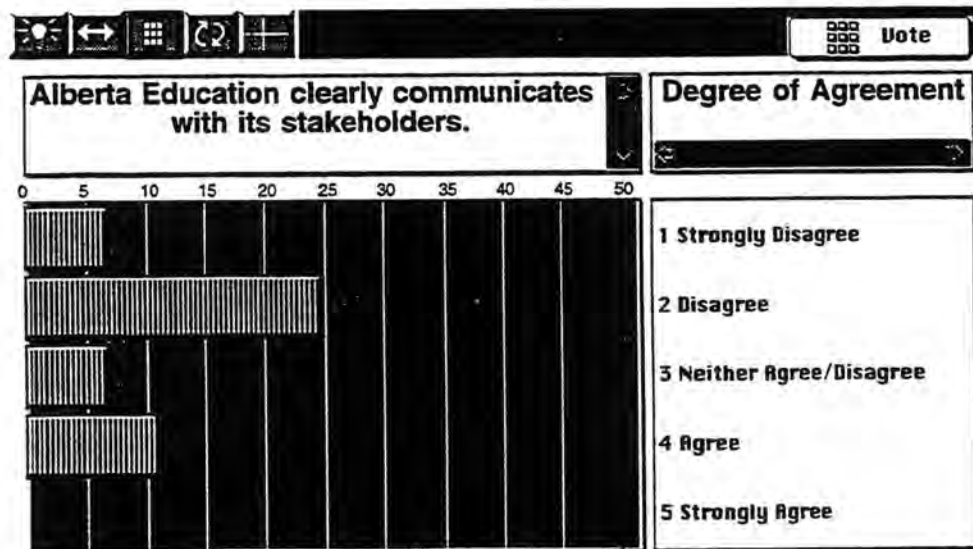
- There should be more trust in superintendents' and trustees' ability to keep information confidential.
- Boards often have not received copies of important releases before the media. The result is trustees and superintendents are asked to comment on Alberta Education policy decisions by the media, without any knowledge of the exact decision. This creates animosity between Alberta Education and its "stakeholders".
- Trustees/superintendents do not get copies early enough to react to reporters.
- Must get document in advance so they can properly provide comments to media.
- If superintendents are to act as educational leaders they must be part of communication links.
- Superintendent is CEO and must be the central point.
- Central communication is important, because jurisdictions are bigger.
- The Deputy Minister should bring superintendents together, and get their agreement that if the Deputy Minister provides them with confidential information, they will not disclose it until an agreed date.
- Alberta Education is sending certain information directly to schools (principals and teachers). This indicates a lack of trust in the Superintendent, and erodes the "stakeholdership".
- Department contacting the principals directly is eroding "trust" between education stakeholders.
- Many principals don't have a problem with direct communication from Alberta Education, as long as it is for efficiency gains (eliminate central office time delay).
- School boards/schools need to have a role in communication.

Content

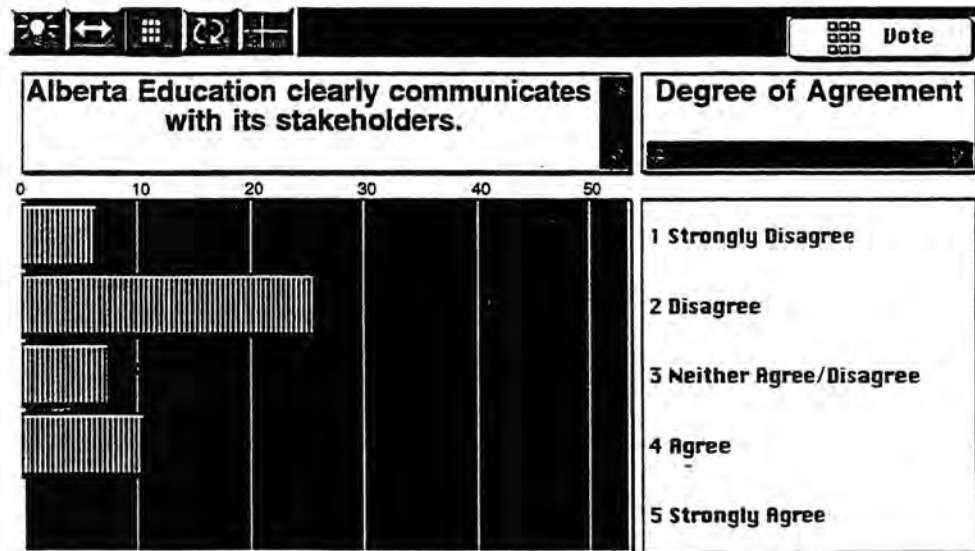
- Written documents are good, but verbal interaction is weak.
- Language is ambiguous - can be interpreted differently by different groups:
- No big picture of what education in Alberta will look like five years from now.
- In certain areas, Alberta Education does not clearly define what they mean or intend by a particular phrase. For example, "school-based management" is a strategy of the business plan, but it is not defined or explained very well. There is confusion in the school boards as to what is meant.
- Alberta Education changes positions on policy matters. e.g. Parent Councils, Transportation Regulations.
- Public reporting in the Provincial Results Report is based heavily on opinion polls and satisfaction surveys. It should also focus on literacy, and employability indicators.
- Advocate more. Tell Albertans more about what we are doing in education, and stress the positives.

The electronic polling responses to the "communicating" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



7. *Alberta Education supports policy directions with adequate and appropriate detail.*

External education stakeholders seem to feel that Alberta Education does a reasonable job in explaining implementation matters with respect to government policy, however, often there is confusion with respect to certain issues. The main concern in this area is inconsistency in interpretation of policy by Alberta Education staff.

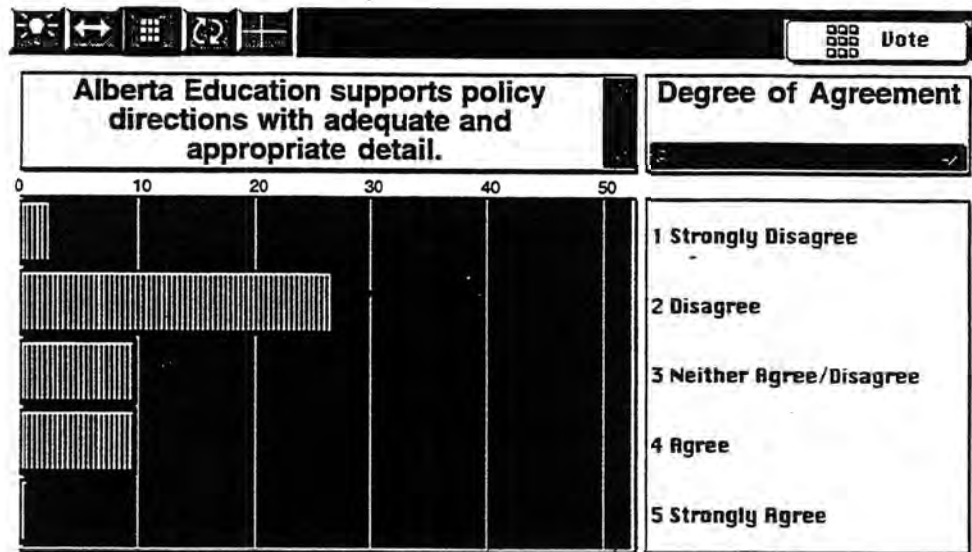
Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

- Policy implementation is usually supported with adequate detail, but often this detail is provided too late to be really useful.
- It seems as though Alberta Education spends too much time trying to perfect a guideline or handbook, rather than getting the basics out on a timely basis.
- The Department often goes to extremes. They provide few details on some areas for fear of offending education stakeholders. Conversely, in some documents they provide excessive detail.
- There is often a lack of consistency in Alberta Education policies, and interpretation of policies by different Alberta Education staff.
- Lack of consistent interpretation of policies by Alberta Education is likely due to Alberta Education making up to rules as they go

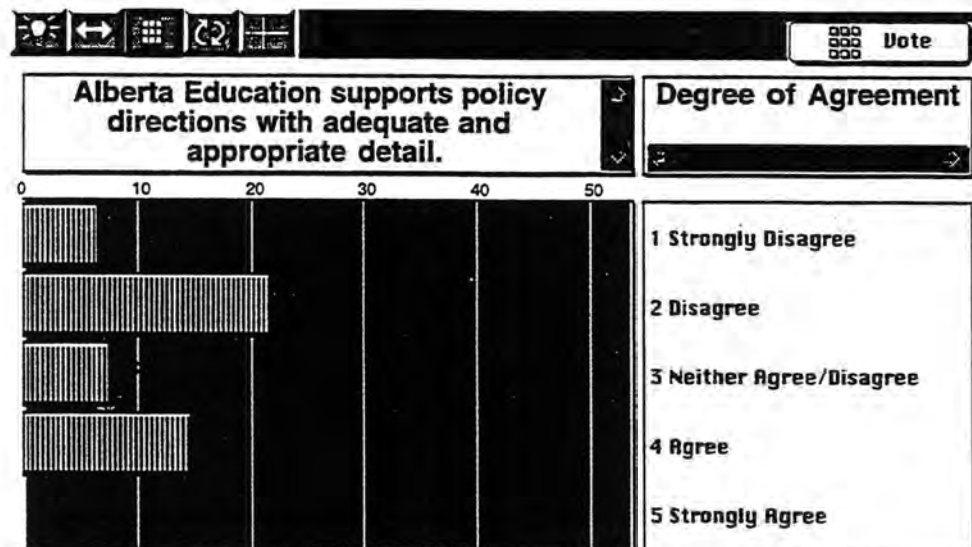
along as opposed to having a clear vision of what each policy is trying to achieve.

The electronic polling responses to the "detailed support" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



8. *Alberta Education provides policy direction support on a timely basis.*

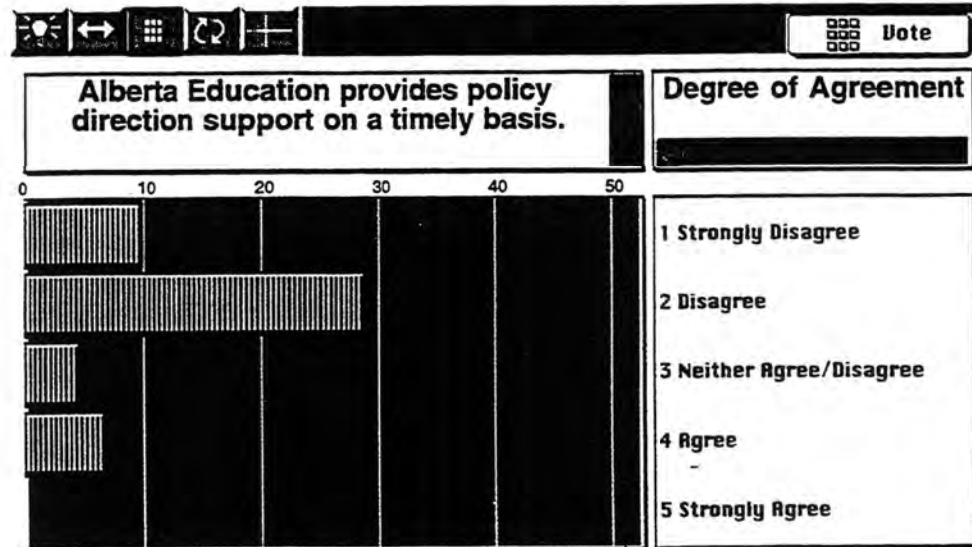
The external education stakeholders were very clear that Alberta Education is weak at communicating to education stakeholders on a timely basis. Focus group participants indicated the typical scenario is for them to hear the possibility about some policy in the media, and then hear nothing from the Department for many months, and then out of nowhere an Alberta Education policy/guideline is released that is effective the next day.

Supporting comments from the Focus Group participants:

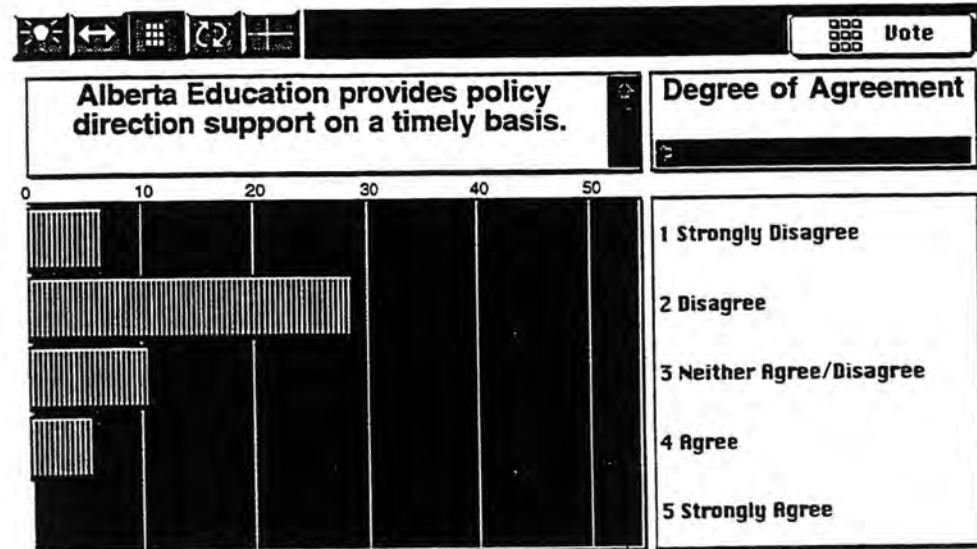
- Policy implementation support or guidelines are not timely.
- The Department may not be able to meet timelines because it is understaffed.
- Very quick timelines for soliciting input from the field results in lack of meaningful input.
- Alberta Education communicates target release dates of key information to education stakeholders, and then does not meet the timelines it sets for itself. School boards have planned their operations around the target dates set by Alberta Education.
- Some examples of untimely policy direct support:
 - Manual for School Councils (issued June, effective September);
 - Transportation regulations (issued August 28th, effective September 1st);
 - Guides to Developing School Board Interim Education Plans;
 - Achievement Exam results and analyses (written in June, issued in December and January);
 - School board reporting requirements (financial) likely won't be communicated until summer of 1996 for 1995/96 school year.

The electronic polling responses to the "timely support" statement are provided below.

Trustees, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers



Principals, Teachers, Parents



Typology of Mechanisms, Controls, Regulations, Policies, etc.

We asked the focus group participants to provide us with input and comments on “Mechanisms, Controls, Regulations, Policies, etc.” implemented by Alberta Education to control and guide the behaviour of various education stakeholders in education.

To provide a basis on which to solicit input, we worked with Alberta Education to develop a “Typology of Mechanisms, Controls, Regulations, Policies, etc.” (included in Appendix 3). The typology grouped the mechanisms, controls, regulations, policies, etc. into seven categories:

- Curriculum
- Student Evaluation/Testing
- Teacher Certification, Evaluation, Development
- Special Education/Needs
- Choice and Involvement
- Reporting of Results
- Funding, Allocation, Monitoring and Operations

Superintendents, secretary-treasurers, and trustees were asked to provide input on all seven categories. Principals, teachers and parents were asked to provide input on the first four categories as their familiarity with the other categories was low.

In addition to obtaining general comments and feedback, we asked the focus group participants to respond to four specific statements about the “tools” developed by Alberta Education in each category:

- 1) **This is an appropriate set of tools to achieve (insert applicable category).**
- 2) **This set of tools is being effectively implemented by the system.**
- 3) **This set of tools is valued by my education stakeholder group.**
- 4) **The current number/amount of tools in this area is (too many <-> too few).⁵**

⁵This statement was added to the last four focus group sessions.

The objective was to obtain general views on the quality and usefulness of Alberta Education's controls and mechanisms in broad areas. The feedback was not designed to identify particular controls and mechanisms that are viewed positively or negatively.

The electronic polling mean averages are provided below based on a 5 point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Trustees/Superintendents/Secretary-Treasurers

	Curriculum	Student Evaluation/ Testing	Teacher Certific'n/ Eval/ Devel.	Special Ed./ Special Needs	Choice/ Involvement	Reporting of Results	Funding Allocation, Mon. Ops.
This is an appropriate set of tools to achieve _____	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.6
This set of tools is being effective implemented by the system.	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.0
This set of tools is valued by my education stakeholder group.	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.4
The current number/amount of tools in this area is (1 = too few; 3 = about right, 5 = too many)	3.4	3.8	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.6	4.1

Principals/Teachers/Parents

	Curriculum	Student Evaluation/ Testing	Teacher Certific'n/ Eval/ Devel.	Special Ed./ Special Needs
This is an appropriate set of tools to achieve _____	3.6	3.2	3.0	3.4
This set of tools is being effective implemented by the system.	3.4	3.5	3.0	3.0
This set of tools is valued by my education stakeholder group.	3.4	3.1	2.9	3.2
The current number/amount of tools in this area is (1 = too few; 3 = about right, 5 = too many)	3.4	4.0	3.2	3.0

External education stakeholder input from the focus group sessions on the quality and usefulness of Alberta Education's controls and mechanisms is summarized by category.

Curriculum

- Curriculum guides are useful and valuable tools; they are envied by US colleagues.
- Curriculum outputs are good.
- Alberta Education has done a lot of good work in curriculum design.
- Western Protocol has proven Alberta Education is ahead of other provinces in terms of curriculum design and content.
- Curriculum documents they produce are very good.
- Most of the documents are well used and valued.
- In the past there was some duplication of curriculum development efforts between Alberta Education and school boards (particularly large urban). Most people feel this has stopped.
- The Alberta curriculum is good, but there is lack of clarity on what a basic education program and what basic education standards are.
- Publishers are influencing curriculum, resulting in more changes than are really required.
- Elementary programs of study are not as detailed as the High School programs of study.
- General agreement that Alberta Education should set curriculum.
- Program of Studies and Guide to Education are valued; the remaining guides are less useful.
- More detailed curriculum guides are valued in rural Alberta.
- Why does the Grade 7-9 curriculum only focus on one level of the course?
- Some guides on the typology are ancillary.
- Lack of maintenance in curriculum development, and lack of time to implement changes.
- Too many changes in curriculum.

- Too much effort on curriculum development, at the expense of curriculum implementation support.
- Limited focus on Fine Arts.
- Curriculum is too prescriptive (e.g. must study "Greece")
- Curriculum is university-focused, and less applicable for students not progressing towards university.
- CTS - 600 Modules; schools are uncertain as to implementation; very costly; the responsibility has been put on school boards/schools to design implementation approaches.

Student Evaluation/Testing

- Student Evaluation/Testing mechanisms are good.
- Publishing the pure results of provincial tests, without explanation, could result in misinterpretation. It makes bad schools get worse and good schools get better.
- Some believe results should not be published. They should be discussed at the school level with the school council to determine what strategies are required to improve performance.
- There has been a shift to increased student achievement testing, but not much increased emphasis on "performance-based" skills assessment (e.g. English speaking and listening skills).
- Several implementation issues Alberta Education should review are:
 - "who" is being tested (special needs are forced to take tests);
 - "absent" receives a mark of below average;
 - testing timelines do not match school board's (Copernican Calendar);
 - tests don't cover: oral, listening, and learning other elements;
 - lack of timeliness of results reduces the value.
- Diploma Exams are good, but Achievement Tests are lower quality (multiple choice).
- Classroom Assessment Materials Project is valued.
- Are the Achievement Tests an accountability test or a diagnostic?

- Much of the Student Evaluation program is not valued by teachers.
- Student evaluation tests focus only on a narrow area of the Curriculum (quantitative).
- Results of Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams should not be the only measure of education system performance. There needs to be blending of exam results with parental satisfaction to evaluate overall performance.
- Focus of student evaluation/testing has changed in last four years. The new focus is felt to place blame, compare schools, pit schools against one another.
- Some view money put into student evaluation and testing is wasted money.
- Most educators will agree the provincial testing program contains good material, and has an admirable purpose. However, most educators are concerned about the proper use of such results.
- Too much testing at Grade 3 level.
- Tests are there to meet Alberta Education's accountability requirements, not to improve learning.
- Alberta Education is spending too much on testing. After the fact - testing is a waste as it does nothing to improve student learning.
- Some diagnostic tools from Alberta Education are useful.
- Provincial testing and inter-school results comparisons are hurting student learning, because teachers "Teach to the Test" - particularly in High School.
- Provincial testing has resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum to only those areas that are tested.
- Reporting of test scores by school, without explanatory factors, such as participation rates, demographic information, Special Needs student percentages, and performance of feeder schools, is damaging.
- Allowing teachers to mark the achievement tests is a good step.
- Alberta Education has stated a policy that school boards will work to ensure "Every child will be above average". This is not possible.

Teacher Certification, Evaluation, Development

- There are two ways to improve teaching:
 - certification
 - in-service/ professional development
- Universities do most of the work in this area; Alberta Education has a limited role.
- Alberta Education should be involved in certifying teachers, but ATA could also fulfil this role.
- Alberta Education might not be the right group to certify teachers.
- It is good that teacher certification is done centrally.
- Alberta Education has always certified teachers - there is no need to change.
- The registry function does nothing to "improve teaching".
- Alberta Education is not involved in on-going professional development of teachers, especially after Regional Offices were closed.
- "Quality Teaching" discussion paper concepts are a step in the right direction. (regular and consistent comment).
 - However, some teachers feel the document implies that teaching in Alberta is poor, which is not the case.
- School boards and associations should be responsible for development and ongoing PD.
- In Alberta, once you get a certificate there is no on-going evaluation process.
- Most Alberta Education documents in this area are not valued.
- Some education stakeholders are satisfied with the "due process" to remove poor teachers, while other believe the key to improving teaching is to make it easier to remove certificates. Many school board administrators, trustees and principals cite stories of the difficulty in trying to remove a bad teacher from the classroom, although there was general recognition there are few poor teachers.

- There is very little ongoing development of teachers. Some education stakeholders suggested the ATA should have a larger role.
- Professional development is 90% teacher's own responsibility.
- Some school board administrators believe the School Act's ceiling of operational time is a barrier to the professional development of teachers.

Special Education/Needs

- Alberta Education is doing very little to "improve the co-ordination of services for children with special needs".
- Some of the proposals in "Guide to Education with Special Needs" are going to be costly and difficult to implement.
- Some jurisdictions are using "magnet schools" to achieve economics - bussing to central.
- "Special Needs Integration" issues are key for Alberta Education to address. Often focus group education stakeholders questioned the appropriateness of Alberta Education's policy that all Special Needs children be integrated in the regular stream of education.
- All Special Needs students, including "severe", need to apply to be exempted from provincial tests - this is insulting to many students who are severely handicapped.
- Accountability standards do not recognize differing levels of Special Needs students in schools.
- Almost all school boards are differentially funding to schools with different levels of Special Needs students. Those that do not differentially fund schools, indicate there is pressure from schools to equally fund based primarily on headcount.
- Lack of resources are forcing Special Needs students into the wrong programs.
- Narrow definition of "severe" makes it hard to get the extra funding, plus the \$9,000 is often not enough to cover the cost of educating a severely handicapped student.
- Alberta Education documents are not useful in tailoring programs to fit the needs of Special Needs students. Guidance on Special Needs issues is too general.

- Problem with criteria of severely handicapped and who they consider severe.
- The provincial funding framework works on a base of \$3,686 for regular, mild and moderately handicapped students, and an additional \$8,900 for severely handicapped students. This framework incorrectly assumes each school board has the same mix of regular, mild and moderate special needs students. Some participants indicated that urban areas typically have higher levels of Special Needs students.
- Exemption of "Special Needs" from provincial tests results in a reported mark of "below standard".

Choice and Involvement

- There is no choice in rural areas. Bussing is not funded beyond the collector boundary.
- Separate school trustees fear that "open boundaries" will result in the dilution of the religious component of their programs.
- In some areas the regulations are too detailed, (School Councils), and in other areas the regulations are too loose (ECS, Home Schooling).
- The "Open Boundaries" provision in the School Act is well intentioned, but the wording is loose -- "providing there is room and resources". Some education stakeholders are concerned that some students are being denied access under this clause -- particular concern about special needs students.
- "Choice" regulations focus on "wants" not people's "needs".
- Alberta Education has not moved to address the concept of "Middle School" as a choice in the system.
- Charter Schools effectiveness is not yet known.
- Charter School Regulations make it hard to set up Charter Schools. It is much easier to convince an existing school board to set up an alternative school program.
- School Councils - too many regulations - creates disinterest.
- Continuum for regulation of School Councils is good
- Alberta Education talks of local autonomy, but only provides School Councils with autonomy - school boards were bypassed.

-
- School-based administrators have limited ability to make spending adjustments to accommodate local input. There are many fixed costs in a school's budget. There is limited flexibility in choosing between spending on teaching staff vs. spending on a new program, because pupil teacher ratios are already at the maximum allowable limits.

Results Reporting

- The education stakeholders had various concerns about Alberta Education's policies with respect to school board results reporting:
 - Information from satisfaction surveys can be misleading.
 - School boards must each design survey instruments and report the results. This will be costly for all of the school boards, and results in more administration when Alberta Education has implemented policies to limit administrative spending.
 - Alberta Education should not force school boards to have Annual Results Reports, or prescribe the contents. Local electorate will hold school boards accountable.
 - Alberta Education is too prescriptive in what performance information school boards should collect and report.
 - School boards should be free to determine the most economical way in which to communicate performance information (e.g. local newspaper if cost effective).
 - Alberta Education should provide general direction on survey design so that every school board does not need to design their own satisfaction survey.
 - Alberta Education should consider regionalizing satisfaction surveys
- Some trustees expressed concern over the lack of consistency by which school boards communicate results to the public, while others felt such variation is necessary.
- "Participation rates" are important to understanding provincial achievement test results, and should be included in all public results reporting.
- The media focuses on the lowest performers, and does not report contributing factors.

Funding, Allocation, Monitoring and Operations

- Alberta Education's monitoring mechanisms are not valued. For example, Alberta Education issued a 22 page "monitoring" report on a nine page school board interim Education Plan (several participants cited this example).
- Alberta Education focuses on school board plan format, not content.
- Alberta Education has little understanding of the "horrendous" process of Credit Enrolment Unit (CEU) data collection and verification required by school boards. A tremendous amount of manual effort is required, particularly in the large urban Boards.
- One size fits all approach to funding school boards does not meet local needs.
- Maintenance funding is equal for each school board based on total school size (sq. ft.) and enrolment. Maintenance costs are impacted by sparsity and distance factors.
- School boards must submit the same financial, and student record information in several formats because Alberta Education branches do not co-ordinate their requests.
- Alberta Education changed the requirement to bus a student if they have 2.4 km (from 4.8 km). Several education stakeholders questioned the need to change this policy (in effect at 4.8 Km for 15 years). Even though Alberta Education is funding this, the need to spend extra funds on bussing is questionable.
- The Credit Enrolment Unit process of funding High School students has created massive amount of work for school boards. Alberta Education has not developed methods to electronically process school board information. The process is not timely (1995 School Year ending August 31, funding adjustments still not known as of December 1995).
- "Attendance Board" services are not valued by some school boards.

Effectiveness, Importance, and Appropriateness of Alberta Education Roles

We asked the focus group participants to provide their input and comments on various roles Alberta Education fulfils in the education system. These roles were developed based on our work with the Department staff to develop the Input-Process-Output models for each business plan goal (see Appendix 1), and the Roles and Responsibilities in Education position paper, released in December 1994.

For each role we asked three questions/statements:

- 1) **To what degree is Alberta Education effectively fulfilling this role in the education system?**
- 2) **For each role of Alberta Education, rate the role's importance to the success of the education system.**
- 3) **For each role of Alberta Education, rate the appropriateness of Alberta Education being involved in the role.**

Quantitative Results of Questions

The mean averages of each group's responses to each question, collected through electronic polling technology, are provided below. Each question used a 5 point scale:

1 = Ineffective, Unimportant, Inappropriate;
5 = Effective, Important, Appropriate

*Note: T/S/ST = Trustees/Superintendents/Secretary-Treasurers
P/T/P = Principals/Teachers/Parents
N/A = Role not addressed with P/T/P*

Role	Effectiveness		Importance to Success of Ed. System		Appropriateness	
	T/S/ST	P/T/P	T/S/ST	P/T/P	T/S/ST	P/T/P
Setting goals: for the education system	3.4	3.3	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.5
Establishing standards: for learner expectations and curriculum	3.5	3.2	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5
Distributing learning resources	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.8	3.1	3.9
Performance reporting: Public reporting of performance of the education system, and the attainment of the business plan goals	2.9	2.4	3.7	3.1	3.7	3.3
Communication: of government legislation, regulations and policy	3.1	3.1	4.2	4.0	4.4	4.2
Legislative requirements: Dealing with legislative requirements (eg. student/teacher appeals, FOIP)	3.1	3.2	3.7	3.5	4.1	3.8
Provincial testing: of student achievement	3.4	3.0	3.8	2.9	4.2	3.3
Data and information management	2.7	2.7	3.6	3.1	3.7	3.6
Consultation: Providing consultation services to education stakeholders	2.0	2.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.8
Ensuring compliance: of education stakeholders with legislation, regulations and policies	3.1	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.8
Issuing teacher certificates	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.9	2.8
Distance learning: Providing distance learning programs	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.9
Establishing stakeholderships: In education with business and the community	2.2	2.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.4
Allocating resources: Equitably allocating resources to school boards	3.2	N/A	4.6	N/A	4.5	N/A
Administering the Department: of Alberta Education (Finance, HR, Records, Mail, Print Room)	2.9	N/A	3.7	N/A	4.2	N/A
Capital project plans: Establishing plans and priorities for capital projects	2.6	N/A	3.8	N/A	3.4	N/A

Graphic Results

The quantitative results shown in the table above, are graphically displayed on the charts on the following two pages. These charts are “tri-axes” graphs that display the three attributes probed for each role.

“Effectiveness” is plotted on the horizontal scale (x-axis), “Importance to the Success of the Education System” is plotted on the vertical scale (y-axis), and “Appropriateness of Alberta Education Involvement” is plotted on the colour scale (z-axis). The colour scale is interpreted as follows:

Red	Orange	Green	Aqua	Blue
Highly Appropriate		Moderately Appropriate	-	Least Appropriate

General Comments on the Quantitative Results

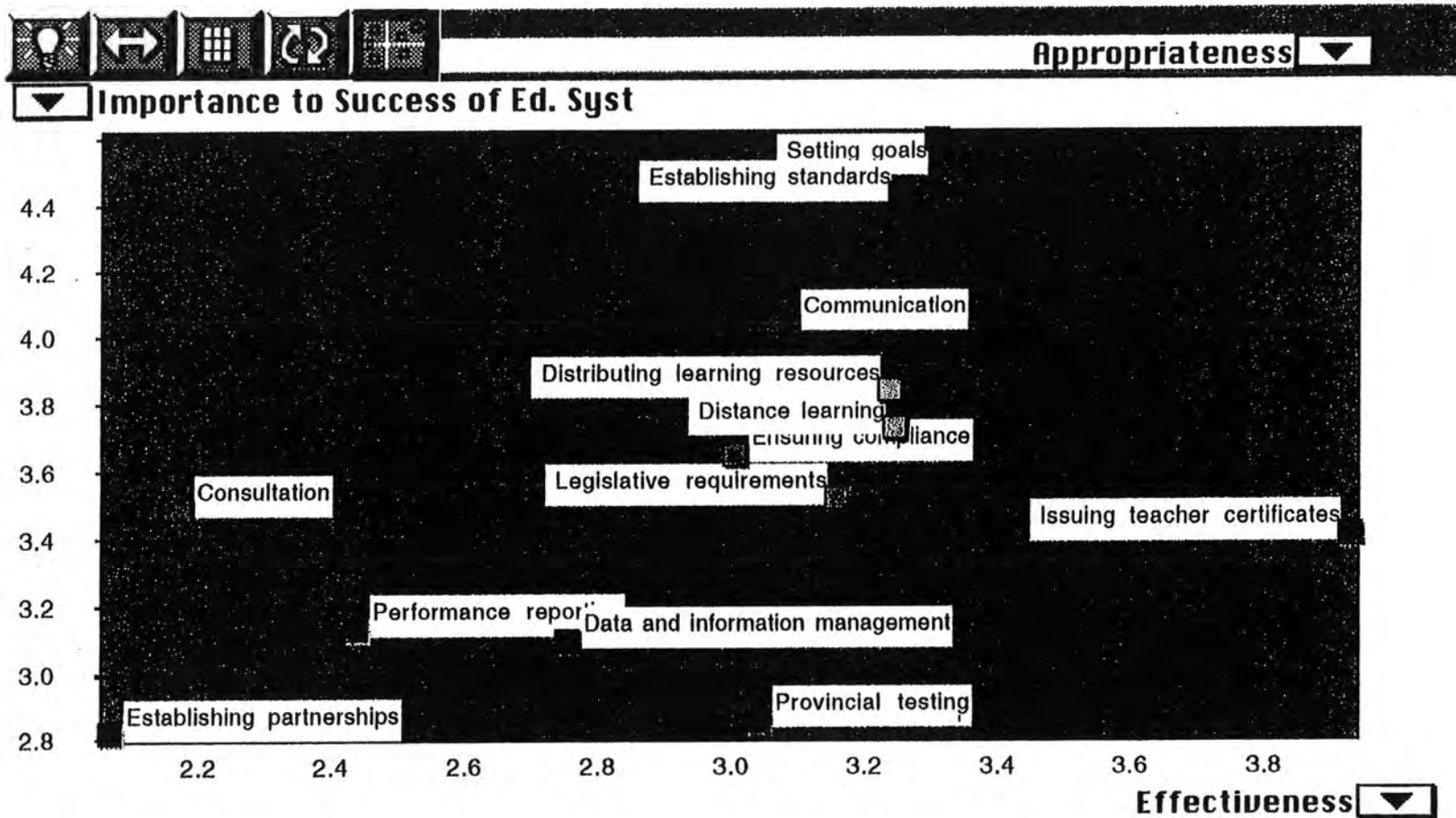
The colour charts are effective at illustrating the external education stakeholders opinions about Alberta Education’s key roles. Overall, the trustees, superintendents, and secretary-treasurers and principals, teachers and parents have similar views on Alberta Education’s roles. The only role with a significantly different assessment between the two groups is “provincial testing”. The feedback received is discussed below.

Importance to Success of the Education System

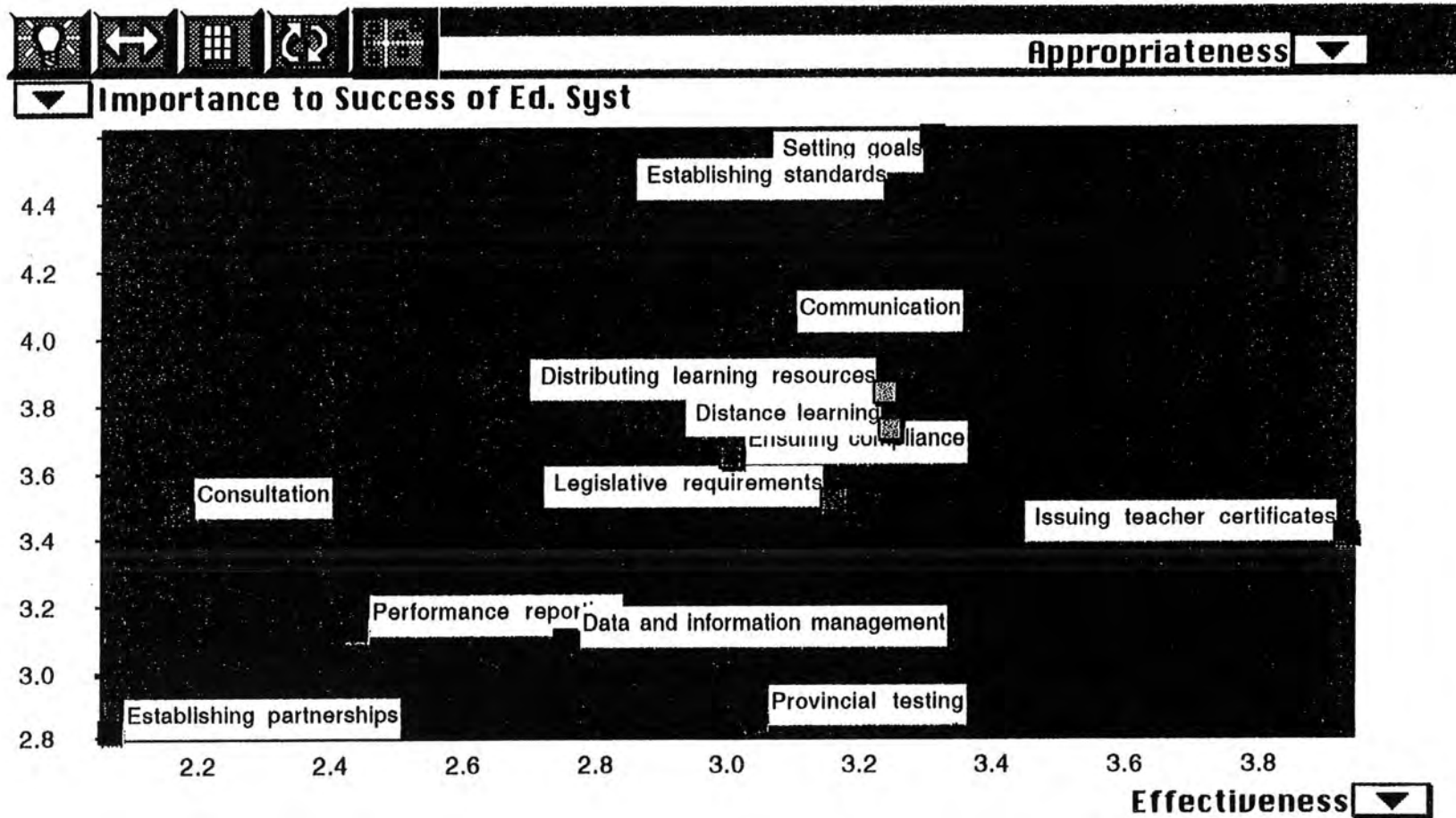
Both groups rated all of the roles as being moderately or highly important to the success of the education system. Trustees, superintendents, and secretary-treasurers rated all roles at 3.0 or above, and principals, teachers and parents rated all roles, excluding “Provincial Testing” (2.9) and “Establishing Stakeholderships” (2.8), at 3.0 or higher. This feedback suggests these 16 roles and the services or outputs provided are important to the success of the education system; there are few services or outputs that education stakeholders feel are not valuable, however, relative importance varies.

There was consistent, high rankings in both groups for the importance to the success of the education system for “Establishing standards for learner expectations and curriculum”, “Setting goals for the education system”, and “Communication of government legislation, regulations and policies”. These high importance ratings

Principals, Teachers and Parents - All Locations



Principals, Teachers and Parents - All Locations



were regularly supported by comments of the focus group participants.

Both groups rated the role of “Establishing stakeholderships in education with business and the community” as being of low importance to the success of the education system. Generally, the focus group participants did not believe that such stakeholderships would have a significant impact on student learning and achievement. We believe this scepticism is rooted in a fear that stakeholderships may “commercialize” education. We sensed a lack of clarity amongst focus group participants as to Alberta Education’s intentions in this area.

Principals, teachers, and parents rated “provincial testing” as being relatively low importance to the success of the education system (2.9). This contrasts with the trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers who rated “provincial testing” as being of moderate importance to the success of the education system (3.8). This difference of opinion is explained by the “philosophical” opposition many teachers have to the policy of provincial testing of student achievement. Teachers who oppose the policy of provincial testing believe there are a multitude of negative impacts of testing each student in core subjects. Many other education stakeholders, as well as many teachers do not oppose provincial testing of student achievement.

In our view, provincial testing of student achievement can be an important element in ensuring the success of the education system if the results are used appropriately. The purpose of provincial testing should not be to look at the absolute results of any one school board, school, teacher, or student; the results should be used to monitor relative changes over time, and to address potential improvements that should be made to the system.

Alberta Education Effectiveness

The colour charts illustrate the participants’ assessment of Alberta Education’s effectiveness in fulfilling each role. On an overall basis, the two groups assigned similar rankings of effectiveness to the various roles. The range of ratings is quite wide, from 2.0 (“Providing Consultation Services”) to 3.9 (“Issuing Teacher Certificates”). However, on an overall basis, the Department was assessed as being somewhat effective for majority of roles. Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers rated 10 of 16 roles as above 3.0 in effectiveness, and principals, teacher and parents rated 8

of 13 roles as above 3.0 in effectiveness. We believe this generally positive rating on the Department's effectiveness is important. It indicates that while there are numerous areas for improvement, as suggested by specific education stakeholder comments, on an overall basis education stakeholders view the department as being effective in most roles.

Both groups gave Alberta Education the highest effectiveness ratings for "Issuing Teacher Certificates", "Establishing Standards for learner expectations and curriculum", "Setting Goals for the education system", "Distributing Learning Resources" and "Distance Learning". Some of the relevant comments of the participants with respect to Alberta Education's effectiveness in these roles are:

- Alberta Education has been effective at developing leading-edge curriculum, and subject specific tools are valued.
- Alberta Education is not getting enough "buy in" during the process of setting goals for the education system, and their approach to goal setting is "too top-down".
- There is a lack of consultation on standards with the school boards, resulting in a lack of "buy-in" in the established standards.
- Distance learning is an effective and important service, but some of the materials are not up to date.

Both groups assigned the lowest rankings of effectiveness to "Establishing stakeholderships in education with business and the community", "providing Consultation services to education stakeholders", and "Data and Information Management". The comments of the participants relevant to Alberta Education's effectiveness in these roles are:

- It is difficult for Alberta Education to centrally establish stakeholderships in education with business and the community; it must happen at the local level.
- Consultation services to education stakeholders are no longer provided, because the Regional Offices have been closed.
- Data and Information Management comments:
 - Branches don't communicate and share information, both external (provided by school boards) and internal (created within the Department). For example, the Student Records Branch calls a school board to obtain a particular student's ID

number, the superintendent has to call "across" the hall at Alberta Education to get the ID number from another Branch, and then call Student Records Branch back.

- Alberta Education's Data and Information Management is not focused on improving teaching, but focused on accountability (to the public).
- Alberta Education collects data without explanations as to the purpose of the data gathering. It is hard to justify the cost of information, when the use is not known.
- Alberta Education is just beginning to get involved in efficient data management. e.g. Student Information System (SIS).
- The Credit Enrolment Unit (CEU) process is inefficient:
 - school boards submit information electronically, and it is sent in hard copy back to school boards to audit and verify student by student
 - involves too much manual re-work at Alberta Education, school boards and school level
 - students have multiple ID's
 - mid-year transfers are hard to track and adjust
 - CTS Modules credits are hard to track
 - untimely adjustment of funding -- 1994-95 CEUs are not yet finalized and it is 3 months into 1996
- Lack of timeliness in data and information (e.g. analysis of achievement test results).
- School boards each have different financial software. (Some agreement amongst participants on the desirability of consistency between school board systems)
- Electronic Information Exchange (EIE) is a step in the right direction:
 - will help reduce manual effort
 - will help both school boards and Alberta Education in planning
 - currently, there is a lack of confirmation of "data receipt" in Alberta Education
- Education plans submitted had to contain budget information already submitted to the Department 5-6 months earlier.
- Department has more than one database and they don't share themselves.

- Requests for information (ad hoc) all seem to get incorporated into the system of capturing data on an ongoing basis. Participants cited examples of having asked Department staff why certain information is needed, and not being provided a valid explanation.
- EIE, SIS, are two processes that are not working well, because of apparent lack of communication in the Department.
- Small grant programs (e.g. Sensory Multi-Handicapped, ESL, etc.) take too much paperwork in relation to the funding involved.

Principals, teachers and parents assessed Alberta Education as being low in effectiveness in "Public reporting of performance of the education system, and the attainment of the business plan goals" (2.4). Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers rated this role somewhat higher at 2.9. The relatively low rating by the principals, teachers and parents is attributable to a number of factors. First, this group indicated less familiarity with the Provincial Results Report and its contents than did trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers. Second, this group is generally more concerned about "public results reporting" and the potential uses of results, as supported by the above comments on "provincial testing". Some of the specific comments relevant to "performance reporting" are:

- Alberta Education needs to find a way to stress that "WE" (all education stakeholders) are working together to educate students.
- Alberta Education is not doing a good job of communicating to the 70% non-parents in Alberta.
- Whether the local jurisdictions should be given the responsibility to publish results, rather than Alberta Education.
- The media tends to focus on negative performance. Alberta Education should report and stress positive performance areas of the education system.

Appropriateness of Alberta Education Involvement

Generally, both groups of focus group participants provided similar assessments as to the appropriateness of Alberta Education being involved in the various roles. The ranges of the mean ratings for various roles are quite broad, but consistent themes emerged.

Both groups indicated it is highly appropriate for Alberta Education to be involved in the roles of "Establishing standards for learner expectations and curriculum", "Setting goals for the education system", and "Communication of government legislation, regulations and policy". The focus group participants consistently supported these roles as the core roles appropriately fulfilled by the Department.

Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers also assessed the appropriateness of Alberta Education being involved in "equitably allocating resources to school boards", "Provincial Testing of student achievement", and "dealing with legislative requirements (e.g. student/teacher appeals, FOIP) as being relatively high. The high appropriateness of these roles for Alberta Education was confirmed with supporting comments.

Both groups assessed "Establishing stakeholderships in education with business and the community" as being an inappropriate role for Alberta Education. The participants indicated such stakeholderships were most appropriately established at the school board and school level.

The groups differed in their opinions as to the appropriateness of Alberta Education's involvement in "Issuing Teacher Certificates". Principals, teachers and parents assigned their second lowest rating to this role (2.8), while trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers assigned a relatively high appropriateness rating (3.9). This difference of opinion was borne out by many diverse comments between the groups and within each group on this activity. The participants see this role as a required element in the education system, but believe that other groups, such as the ATA, may also be able to fulfil this role. Some members of each group expressed concern about the ATA's ability to act as both a professional certification body and a labour union.

Alberta Education's involvement in "Establishing plans and priorities for capital projects" was assessed as relatively low appropriateness by trustees, superintendents, secretary-treasurers. While there was some support for provincial involvement, some participants indicated it may be more appropriate for school boards to prioritize capital projects.

The appropriateness of Alberta Education's involvement in "Provincial Testing" was rated as relatively low by principals, teachers and parents (3.3). This assessment is consistent with this

group's generally negative comments on the policy of provincial testing of student achievement. Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers assessed the appropriateness of the Department's involvement much higher (4.2). These differences are indicative of the wide diversity of views on the policy of universal provincial achievement testing. Almost no participants in either group suggested that a group other than Alberta Education should more appropriately be the "testing agent", and no specific suggestions were offered.

Trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers assessed the role of "Distributing Learning Resources" as being lower in appropriateness for Alberta Education (3.1). They commented that it may be feasible for another group to provide this service at the same or less cost. However, the ultimate cost to the end-users is a major issue.

Feedback on Roles vs. Alberta Education Budget

As can be seen from a review of the top right quadrant of the charts, both groups rated "Establishing Standards" for learner expectations and curriculum, and "Setting Goals" for the education system highly on all three categories. The goal-oriented budget information in Appendix 2, shows that these roles consume a significant amount of the Department's operating budget (i.e., Goal 1 - 37% of total spending). Education stakeholders consistently identified these roles as the core roles for the Department, and also consistently indicated the Department is highly effective in these roles. For these two roles, there is a good fit between the allocation of the Department's resources, and education stakeholders' views of importance, effectiveness and appropriateness.

The Superintendents, Secretary-Treasures and Trustees assessed the role of equitably "Allocating Resources" to school boards relatively high on all three criteria. The Department spends about 6% or \$3.3 M of its operating budget on this role (see Appendix 2 - Goal 6). Based on the views of key education stakeholders, this important role is being effectively addressed by the Department.

Both groups rated the roles of "Establishing Stakeholderships" in education with business and the community and providing "Consultation" services to education stakeholders relatively low on all three criteria. These ratings are understandable in that the Department directs very little of its operating budget to either of these two roles.

Other Comments on Roles of Alberta Education

During the focus group discussions several other comments were noted that are relevant to Alberta Education's implementation of government policy. In no particular order, the significant comments were:

- Alberta Education may be involved in too many things. They should focus on core lines of business.
- Classroom Assessment Materials Project (CAMP) may prove to be useful, but it is not yet known.
- Accountability is achieved at the local level through parents and voters -- not at the provincial level. Efforts to report provincial performance in education therefore have minimal impact on accountability.
- The slipping effectiveness (timeliness and quality of service) in provincial testing of student achievement by Student Evaluation Branch) is likely due to the increased volume of tests.
- Analysis of provincial testing results needs improvement.
- Minimal "compliance monitoring" activities are completed by the Department.
- Alberta Education does not do anything with the information that school boards submit.
- Alberta Education is not good at ensuring compliance, yet there is incredible effort on part of jurisdiction to comply. There is a risk of this effort falling off, because jurisdictions don't have the time or resources to continue to comply on "good faith".
- Funding Framework Issues:
 - Distance and sparsity is missing out of maintenance and administration side
 - Some jurisdictions "have to" transfer 2% from their "instructional block" to cover non-instructional expenses, while some school boards do not have to. This creates inequity in instructional funding.
 - Some school boards wanted to transfer money from Transportation to somewhere else but were not allowed to. Transportation grant structure promotes inefficiency in certain jurisdictions, due to short bus routes.

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- Formulas are the same and simple but don't treat the "operators" equitably although they are "equal" (e.g. heating costs in Ft. McMurray vs. Lethbridge).
 - Alberta Education branches do not communicate with each other
 - "different pockets of knowledge and information."
 - Education stakeholders, including Alberta Education branches, don't act as though they are on the same team.

A5.2 Internal Directors Focus Group

Directors within Alberta Education participated in an internal focus group to obtain input and feedback on issues related to the business plan goals, controls and mechanisms, and organizational structure. Eighteen Directors attended this session.

Electronic polling technology was used to facilitate discussion on opinions and views. The following sections provide an overview of the questions being addressed, the electronic polling feedback results and the focus group participants feedback and comments.

Alberta Education "Business Plan Goals"—Issues & Observations

The first set of statements presented to the Group were directed at each of the 9 Goals for Education from the Alberta Education business plan. The four statements about each goal are:

- 1.1) The Department can achieve this goal with current mechanisms and controls that have been put in place.**
- 1.2) The Department can achieve this goal with current Department organizational structure.**
- 1.3) This goal is important to the ultimate success of the Education System.**
- 1.4) The Department has achieved “buy-in” from its education stakeholders on this goal.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree			Strongly Agree

Summary Results to Questions (Average of Votes)

	Business Plan Goal	Curr. Mechan- isms	Curr. Org. Struc- ture	Import- ance to Bus. Plan	Degree of Buy- in
1	Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.	3.6	3.5	4.9	3.4
2	Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and greater parental/community involvement in education.	3.4	3.4	3.9	2.8
3	Improve the co-ordination of services for children with special needs.	2.9	2.6	4.2	3.5
4	Improve teaching.	2.7	2.6	4.8	3.5
5	Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.4
6	Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.	4.0	4.3	4.4	3.5
7	Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.	3.8	2.3	3.7	3.4
8	Ensure the costs of education are reasonable and under control.	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.2
9	Ensure that the education system is open and accountable.	3.8	3.4	3.8	3.4

General Comments of the Group

- Each goal has multiple dimensions. e.g. Goal 1 - establishing, communicating, and achieving.
- All goals are seen as important, but ultimate realization depends on the degree of control the Department has over its stakeholders.

- The goals are related. For example, Goal 9 impacts the attainment of Goal 1.
- Some indication that “business plan” is seen as an offensive term by the Department’s key education stakeholders. This title intensified conflict between the Department and its education stakeholders during the restructuring. Suggestion that “Education Plan” would have been a better term.

Issues Identified by Participants Related to Each Question

1.1) Appropriate Mechanisms and Controls

- Many mechanisms/tools used by the Department are “guidance” rather than compliance.
- The Group is most confident in attaining the business plan goals where the Department has “control” mechanisms in place.
- Where there are few control mechanisms in place and available to the Department, the rating of ultimate attainment of the goal is lower. e.g. Improve Teaching, at 2.7 was the lowest ranked goal on this question, and generally, the Department has few controls aimed at this goal.
- Generally, the Group felt the Department has few compliance mechanisms. Those that are in place are felt to be too strong, and the use of these compliance mechanisms would likely result in harm to the children. As a result, the existing compliance mechanisms are rarely used.
- The Department issues many written documents aimed at communicating information to the Education Stakeholders and other education stakeholders, but, notwithstanding the documents are high quality, they:
 - might not be read
 - might not be the appropriate medium for all education stakeholders
 - are often viewed as only partial disclosure
 - are open to misinterpretation
- Some of the mechanisms might have been appropriate before the restructuring of Alberta Education, but are now no longer appropriate.

-
- The existing framework of mechanisms is fragmented and requires alignment to the business plan goals, and Alberta Education's new role and responsibilities in the decentralized education system.

1.2) Appropriate Organization Structure

- The lowest average rating was for Goal 7 (2.3). This implies the Group believes the internal organizational structure of Alberta Education is a barrier to the efficient and effective management of the Department.
- The Department has assigned responsibility for the attainment of the Goals to the three Assistant Deputy Ministers (Lead Responsibility), and a few Directors (Goal Co-ordinators). High-level matrix responsibility.
- These responsible individuals have not been assigned supporting teams of individuals. As a result, the branches of Alberta Education continue to retain a "functional" perspective, rather than a "goal" perspective.
- The Department's historical decision hierarchy is seen as a barrier to the attainment of the goals.
- The historical and existing culture of Alberta Education does not exhibit information sharing. The Group indicated that many of the functions (branches/divisions) in Alberta Education "hoard" information. This practice is seen as a barrier to the attainment of the goals.
- One comment was that organizational structure issues are less important to the attainment of the business plan goals than the "fear" of job loss by the Department's staff. Lack of communication has contributed to the perpetuation of this fear.
- An indication that there is unhealthy competition between the branches in the Department.

1.3) Importance of Each of the Business Plan Goals

- All goals were rated as being of relatively high importance to the ultimate success of the Education System. The range was 3.6 to 4.9 out of 5.
- The Group indicated that there is some lack of agreement within Alberta Education as to the relative importance of each of the goals and the strategies supporting the goals.

-
- The Group indicated some lack of commitment to the goals, and believes the goals were “set by government -- not us”.

1.4) Degree of “Buy-In” by the Education Stakeholders

- There is a differing degree of “buy-in” to the goals and strategies depending on the Education Stakeholder being considered. Some groups are on-side, and others are vehemently against the directions implemented by Alberta Education.
- The education stakeholders in the Education System are cynical about the consultation process used to arrive at the goals for education and the restructuring agenda. The education stakeholders feel as though the consultation process was “not real”, and the government had already decided the direction for education.
- Alberta Education staff are viewed as “the government” when they visit the other Education Stakeholders.
- There is some confusion within Alberta Education as to the new role of the Department (i.e. governance role vs. delivery role).
- The Department historically has been seen as a “rower”. There is some confusion within the Department as to what the new “steering” role involves.
- A large barrier to the realization of the business plan goals is the lack of trust felt by the education stakeholders towards the government/Alberta Education. Some of the Stakeholders believe that most of the initiatives undertaken by the government/Alberta Education are only a front for a hidden agenda of change or undisclosed policy decisions.

Specific Observations Related to Goals

Goal 1 - High Standards

- Goal 1 has multiple dimensions. The Group indicated the Department is effectively setting high standards and testing for the achievement of those high standards. However, the weakest area is likely in the communication of the standards.
- It is difficult to communicate to the “community” what the standards of education are, and it is also difficult to develop a shared understanding about the standards.
- What is the most effective method of communication of education standards with each of the Departments’ education

stakeholders. It may be that different audiences require different methods to maximize effectiveness of communication. To date, the Department has relied heavily on written guidebooks.

- The Department's current focus on measuring achievement is on the traditional areas: Math, English, Science, Social Studies. This is because these areas are easiest to test on a provincial basis. The result is that other areas, which are also valuable to the education of Alberta children, are viewed as being of lesser importance.
- Some areas of the curriculum (learner expectations) are felt to be adequate or good, but some are in need of updating.

Goal 2 - Choice and Involvement

- Some concern the Department is focusing on measuring performance in the traditional areas, but that might not be what parents value.
- Choice (Goal 2) has been legislated, but is not available to all parents for a number of reasons:
 - rural areas have limited schooling options in the area, and bussing is not funded
 - special needs children limited because of programs
 - School board policies about collector areas
- There is limited parental involvement (Goal 2) in the development of curriculum and instructional strategies.

Goal 4 - Improve Teaching

- Initial certification is really the only mechanism the Department has in place to "Improve Teaching". The real control on this goal rests with the school boards.
- Consultations with education stakeholders indicated that improved teaching was important for the government to pursue. However, the ATA lobbied strongly for the government to not be involved directly in improving teaching.

Goal 7 - Efficient and Effective Department

- The Department has continued to do many of the processes that it used to do prior to the restructuring of the education system, and the downsizing of the Department. Each process of the

Department needs to be evaluated in relation to the Department's new role in the Education System.

- It is difficult to motivate the Department's staff (5 of 6 who are non-management) to obtain results when they believe their job will be eliminated.

Alberta Education "Mechanisms, Controls, Tools" – Issues & Observations

The second set of questions asked the Group to rate various mechanisms, controls and tools produced, issued or used by the Department to govern and guide the education system. A listing of a typology of mechanisms, controls, and tools was prepared that grouped the items into eight type groups.

The Group was asked to review each of the eight groups of tools, and consider the following statements:

- 2.1) This is an appropriate set of tools to achieve "_____".
- 2.2) This set of tools is being effectively implemented by the system.
- 2.3) These tools are valued by your education stakeholders.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree/Disagree		Strongly Agree

Summary Results to Questions (Average of Votes)

Tools Directed at	Appropriate Set of Tools	Effectively Implemented	Valued by Stakeholders
Curriculum	3.6	3.5	3.9
Student Evaluation / Testing	3.7	3.7	3.5
Teacher Certification / Evaluation	2.9	2.8	2.9
Special Education / Special Needs	2.9	2.9	3.8
Choice / Involvement	3.5	2.9	3.3
Reporting of Results	3.5	2.6	2.8
Funding / Allocation / Monitoring / Operations	3.8	3.6	3.8
Internal Efficiencies / Effectiveness	2.7	2.5	2.4

General Comments of the Group

- Most of the tools used by the Department to govern and guide the system are written documents. Change is not completed solely by issuing a document.
- Some tools related to the business plan goals have not yet been implemented.
- Some of the tools that were valued by the education stakeholders have been discontinued by the Department (e.g. Regional Services Consultations and In-Service).

Issues Related to Each Question

2.1) *Appropriate Tools to Achieve "_____"*

- Generally, the Group indicated a high degree of comfort with the quality of the tools. The greatest degree of comfort was around tools where the Department has "control" (e.g. Program of Studies).
- Some concern was expressed that the tools aimed at parents and teachers are not being read, or if read misunderstood.
- The set of tools ranked with highest degree of appropriateness are those directed at "Funding / Allocation / Monitoring / Operations" (3.8 of 5). Tools directed at "Curriculum" and "Student Evaluation / Testing" were also ranked as highly appropriate. The Group indicated the appropriateness of these sets of tools is largely because the Department has a high degree of control in these areas.
- "Teacher Certification / Evaluation" and "Special Education / Special Needs" tools were rated as somewhat inappropriate (2.9 of 5). The Group indicated the inappropriateness of these sets of tools results from the Department not having implemented the proper tools to achieve these outcomes. It was felt these areas (Goals 3 and 4) have not received as much attention by the Department as some of the other areas of the business plan.
- The tools directed at "Internal Efficiencies / Effectiveness" were rated as being the least appropriate (2.7 of 5). The Group referenced their earlier comments about the internal hierarchical barriers, lack of communication between functions, and the lack of true goal resource alignment.
- Some concern was expressed there are no "penalties" for school boards not complying with the regulations and policies

promulgated by the Department. It is unclear what recourse will happen if a school board/superintendent does not comply with a Department regulation or policy.

2.2) Tools Effectively Implemented

- The Group indicated the tools that are most effectively implemented are those where the Department is prescribing actions to be taken by a group(s) of the Education Stakeholders.
- Where the Department issues “guides”, the Department is unsure whether the tool has been effective in changing perceptions or behaviour of the education stakeholders.
- The Group indicated that some of the education stakeholders do not feel they are being supported in the implementation of change in education. The Department realizes this, but does not have the resources to support the implementation of all changes.
- The lowest rating on the effective implementation of tools was for those directed at the reporting of results (2.6 of 5). The group indicated that the school board results reporting framework was still in the developmental stages, and has not yet been effectively implemented.

2.3) Tools Valued by Education Stakeholders

- Overall, the tools used by the Department to govern and guide the education system are perceived as being valued by the Department’s education stakeholders. Curriculum, Special Education / Special Needs, and Funding / Allocation / Monitoring / Operations tools are perceived as being highly valued by the education stakeholders.
- The lowest ranked areas are the tools directed at Teacher Certification / Evaluation and Reporting of Results. The Group indicated that for each of these areas, different education stakeholders would have differing perceptions of the value of the Department’s tools directed at these areas. For example, in Reporting of Results, school boards and teachers would likely not value the tools that have been implemented, but parents would likely value the tools that have been put in place.

Issues Identified in the Session

- The Department is confident in the achievement of the business plan goals where there are “controls” governing the behaviour of the education stakeholders.

-
- Responsibility for each of the goals has been assigned, but the Department organizationally has not been aligned with the goals.
 - The ultimate attainment of several of the business plan goals is dependent on co-operation of all of the education stakeholders, and the Department does not have the ability for mandate this co-operation.
 - The Group believes internal Department organizational and cultural issues are a barrier to the attainment of the business plan Goals.
 - There is an extreme lack of trust by the education stakeholders towards the government (Alberta Education), and this is a large barrier to making meaningful progress towards improving the education of students.
 - The business plan goals were not developed in consultation with Education Stakeholders, and as a result, they do not "believe" in the goals.
 - Communication, both externally and internally, is believed to be an area of weakness of the Department.
 - One of the key areas of conflict between the Department and its Education stakeholders is the focus of the education system. The Department is moving the system to focus on "outcomes", and many education stakeholders believe the focus should still be on the "process" of education.
 - It was felt the Department is lacking mechanisms and controls as well as organizational structure to achieve the goals of "Improve Teaching" and "Improve the Coordination of Services for Children with Special Needs".

A5.3 Comparison of Internal/External Feedback on Mechanisms

A comparison of the electronic balloting responses on the perceptions of tools between the internal Director's group and the external groups of trustees/superintendents/secretary-treasurers and principals/teachers/parents appears on the facing page. Only the administrators responses are compared as it was felt this group has the greatest familiarity with the tools of Alberta Education.

There is consensus by both groups that the curriculum and student evaluation tools are generally appropriate, effectively implemented and valued. Responses were rated amongst the highest of the categories with generally the lowest gap between the two groups.

Both groups also generally agreed the tools under teacher certification were weak as were those within special education and special needs. The external responses indicated the tools that were in place were of value as they provided some mechanisms in this area.

The internal group felt the reporting tools were on the higher side on appropriateness, however were perceived to be weaker in effective implementation and value by education stakeholders. The external group rated the effectiveness of implementation and value higher.

The greatest gap in views is related to the funding, allocation, monitoring, and operations tools. The internal responses reflect the comfort in control oriented mechanisms. The external responses reflect the preference for Alberta Education to set targets and allowing the school boards implementation responsibility.

It is interesting the greatest gap in perceptions is on the perception of value to education stakeholders of this set of tools. Internally, the Department feels these tools are relatively highly valued, whereas the external responses indicates these tools are relatively the lowest value. The second greatest gap in responses is the internal view that these are an appropriate set of tools whereas the external group's perception is this set of tools has a lower rating in appropriateness.

A5.4 Organizational Change Management Assessments of Alberta Education Staff

A focus group was facilitated with a cross-section of Alberta Education staff below Director level. Three Ernst & Young Organizational Change Management tools were used on which input was obtained. The tools used were:

- *Communications Effectiveness Assessment* - examines the degree of delivery of clear messages and the promotion of ongoing dialogue which allows information and perceptions to flow in both directions in an organization.
- *Predicting the Impact of Change Assessment* - examines the impact a change effort will have on its "targets". For the purposes of these focus groups, the change discussed where the changes contemplated in the business plan and the implementation of those changes.
- *X-Factor Change Readiness Assessment* - which examines an organization's readiness for change.

These tools are not intended for use as a statistically valid and reliable survey, or to be distributed to a large number of people. Rather they provide the ability to identify issues on which to base further investigation and discussion. The responses obtained reflect significant standard deviations, indicating a broad range of views and responses to the issues.

The results of the "Communications Assessment" are provided below. The characteristics on which the ratings were obtained appear on the left side of the chart. The mean averages of the responses to the issues are shaded on the chart.

Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Adequate Job Information	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
2. Job-Related Surprises	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
3. Organizational Surprises	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
4. Information Access	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Job-Related Relevance	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. Organizational Influence	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
7. Information Confusion	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
8. Management Clarification	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
9. Job-Related Expectations	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. Strategy Understanding	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
11. Change Understanding (Content)	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. Change Understanding (Process)	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
13. Communication Mechanisms	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
	I Low Risk: Enabler			II Caution			III High Risk: Barrier			

Category I: Low Risk - Enabler

Any item in this range indicates a low level of disruption and a positive prognosis for successful communications.

Category II: - Caution Range

Any item in this range indicates a moderate level of disruption and a guarded prognosis for successful communications.

Category III: - Barrier

Any item in this range indicates a high level of disruption and a negative prognosis for successful communications.

As mentioned earlier, there was considerable disparity of responses to the various issues, which would indicate a broad range of views on the internal communications effectiveness of the Department. There were positive views with respect to communications, however inter - branch communications were generally felt to be weak and that information hoarding was often encountered.

As can be seen from the above chart, the majority of characteristics from the sample fall within the moderate range. This illustrates a reasonable basis on which to further improve inter-departmental communications although some caution is required.

The critical aspects of change for the "Predicting the Impact of Change Assessment" are provided below.

-
- **Amount** - The number of alterations required by the change.
 - **Scope** - The range or span of the organization affected by the change.
 - **Time** - The amount of time people have to implement the change.
 - **Transferability** - The degree to which the change is easy to communicate and will be understood.
 - **Predictability** - The degree to which people can accurately anticipate the effect of the change on them.
 - **Ability** - The degree to which people feel they have or can attain the knowledge and skill necessary to implement the change.
 - **Willingness** - The degree to which people are motivated to implement the change.
 - **Values** - The degree to which people must change some of their strongly held beliefs about the way they are operating.
 - **Emotions** - The extent to which the change requires people to feel differently about other people or operating procedures.
 - **Knowledge** - The degree to which the change required people to learn new information or view existing information differently than they have in the past.
 - **Behaviours** - The extent to which the change requires people to modify their daily routine of job-related activities.
 - **Logistics** - The degree to which the change requires any significant alternation in employ job procedures, such as scheduling, time management, and equipment utilization.
 - **Economics** - The degree to which the change requires people to operate differently regarding budgets, expenses, and funding.
 - **Politics** - The degree to which people must modify their current methods of influencing others, utilizing power, working in a team, dealing with territoriality, and/or protecting vested interests.

The results of the "Predicting the Impact of Change Assessment" are provided below. The critical aspects of change on which ratings were obtained appear on the left side of the chart. The average mean of the responses obtained are shaded in the chart.

Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Amount	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
2. Scope	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
3. Time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Transferability	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Predictability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Ability	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Willingness	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Values	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Emotions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
11. Behaviors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Logistics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Economics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
14. Politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
	I Low Risk: Enabler			II Caution			III High Risk: Barrier			

Category I: Low Risk - Enabler

Any item in this range indicates a low level of disruption and a positive prognosis for successful communications.

Category II: - Caution Range

Any item in this range indicates a moderate level of disruption and a guarded prognosis for successful communications.

Category III: - Barrier

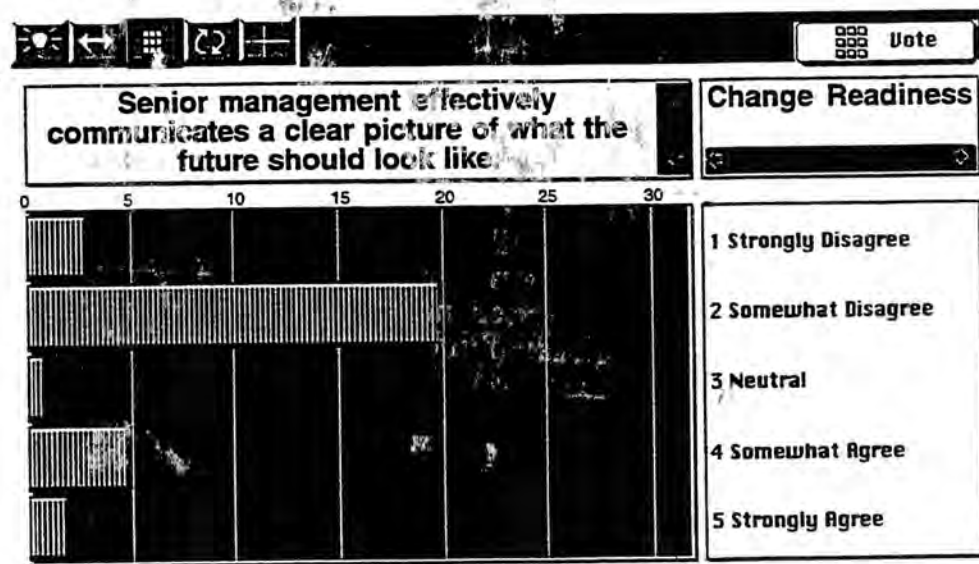
Any item in this range indicates a high level of disruption and a negative prognosis for successful communications.

As illustrated in the above chart, the majority of characteristics from the sample fall within the moderate to high risk range. The higher ratings are likely due to the magnitude of change being implemented in the system and the adjustments that are occurring within the Department. These are illustrated by the higher ratings for the amount and scope of change. In addition, the higher ratings are also illustrative of reduced funding and political issues.

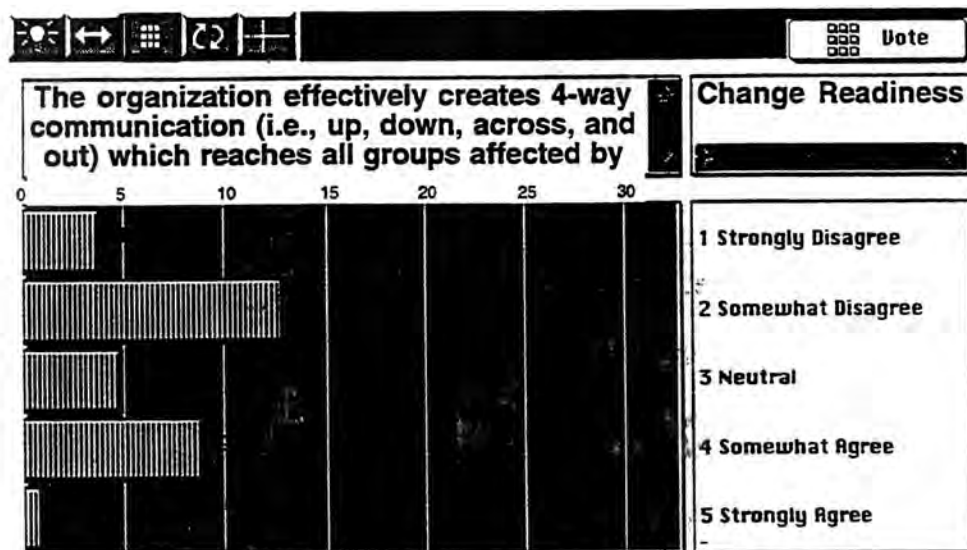
The majority of the characteristics fall within the moderate range. The ability to adopt the changes will be a pivotal element in change outcome and, therefore, requires special attention in the planning and

execution of the implementation steps. A significant amount of the change has already occurred from the business plan. It is important that Department senior management be proactive in addressing the internal implications of the change.

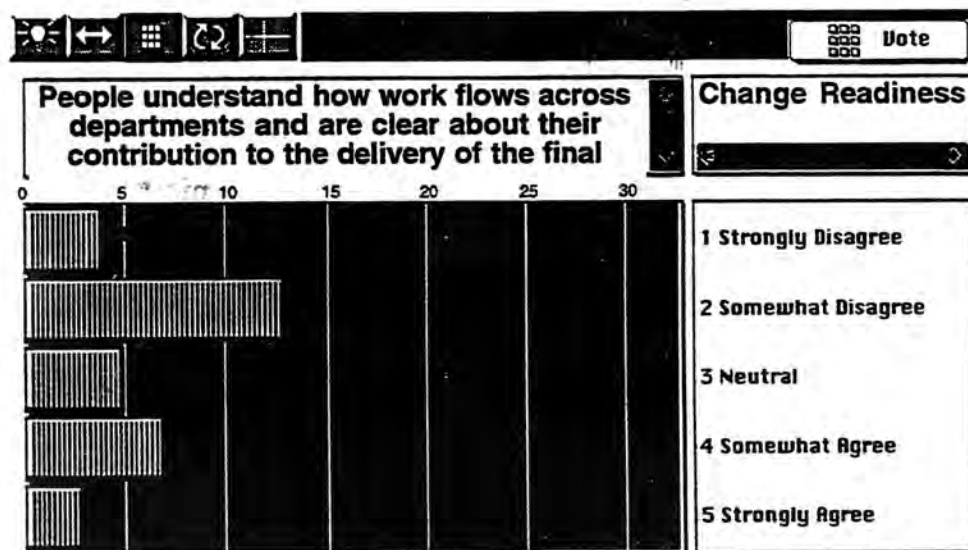
A key issue to come out of the "Change Readiness Assessment" is the need for senior management to effectively communicate a clear vision of what the future should look like. This is illustrated by the following response.



To the issue of effective 4-way communication (i.e., up, down, across and out), responses were somewhat bi-modal with a stronger response on the negative side. Feedback indicated a lack of sharing of information. This is illustrated below:



This was further illustrated in responses to the issue of an understanding of work flows across departments. Responses were varied along the continuum of agreement and disagreement, however, the lack of information interchange and communications between branches was often cited.



The focus groups also believed the structure of the organization is lacking in flexibility and the organizational culture is weak in its acceptance to innovation and change. Focus group participants viewed cross functional goal teams are often handicapped because of functional reporting. These points are illustrated in the following responses.

